

Union United Methodist Church
Fall FOCUS Bible School, 2022
FOCUS: Followers Of Christ Understanding Scripture
Study: Book of Genesis

Week 3: October 12, 2022

Babel, A New Beginning in Abram

This Week's Study: **Genesis chapters 11 through 14**

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1. Recap & Reminder

- **Overview of Genesis**

The table below gives a breakdown of the chapters of Genesis, with themes that we shall be exploring in this study. We shall cover one theme per week. Our next week's study is Genesis 11 through 14 for the week.

From	To	Theme
1	4	Creation & The Fall, Original Sin
5	10	Adam through Noah: Judgement & New Covenant
11	14	Babel, A New Beginning in Abram
15	17	Abrahamic Covenants
18	20	Intercession & Judgement: Sodom & Gomorrah
21	25	Isaac - A Promise Fulfilled; Faithfulness Proven
26	30	Abrahamic Covenants: Second Generation - Jacob & Esau
31	36	Jacob's Family; Reconciliation with Esau
37	41	Abrahamic Covenants: Third Generation - Jacob's Children
42	47	Joseph & Migration to Egypt
48	50	Israel in Egypt, Death of Jacob

Please refer to last two week's outline and lectures for more background. You can find these on our website: <https://unionumcnc.com>

2. Genesis 11 to 14 Overview

- **Genesis 11:1-9 Tower of Babel**

This is an interesting story that shows the potential we have when united and how God reacts to human prideful ambition

- **The Prideful Ambition**

The purpose of the tower of Babel:

“Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, **so that we may make a name for ourselves;** otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

Clearly, their motivation was the pride of human achievement.

- **Power of Unity**

Interesting: they would have achieved their objective!

6 The Lord said, “**If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.**”

- **God’s Reaction to Human Pride**

7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.”

8 So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. 9That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world.

This story is a practical reminder of 1 Peter 5:6 & Proverbs 3:34

“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble”

- **Genesis 11:10-27 Family Line of Shem, Noah’s First Son**

In Shem’s family line we see life expectancy dramatically shorten. Shem lived 600 years.

- Shem’s descendants are called Semites
- Abram was 10 generations from Shem
- Shem was still living when Abram was born
- Life expectancy became shorter and shorter till, in the 8th generation Nahor (Abram’s grandfather) lived to be 148 - v24-25
- Terah’s sons were: Abram, Nahor, and Haran - v26

- **Genesis 11:27-32 Abraham’s Lineage, Part of Shem’s Family**

Setting the scene: Important characters in Abram’s lineage and story

- Abram's Dad - Terah
- Abram had 2 brothers: Nahor and Haran - v26
- Haran died early - v28
- Lot, Abram's nephew, was the son of Haran - v27
- Abram married Sarah, it is not clear whose daughter she was - v29
- Sarah was barren - v30
- Terah emigrated from Ur of the Chaldeans with Abram, Lot, and Sarah to Haran. Terah died there.
 - Clearly Lot became the ward of Abram at that point (12:4)

- **Genesis 12:1-3: God Calls Abram;**

God called Abram with specific instructions.

The call came with a Covenant:

- **Instruction**

1 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. NRSV

Note:

- Obedience required faith, and sacrifice.
- God called Abram 'alone'

"1 Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the Lord.

Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.

2 Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you;

for he was but one when I called him,

but I blessed him and made him many." Isaiah 51:1-2 NRSV

- **Covenant Promise**

2 "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 the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." NRSV

- This is a 7-part Covenant Promise
 - I will make you a great nation
 - I will bless you
 - I will make your name great
 - You will be a blessing
 - I will bless those who bless you
 - I will curse the one who curses you
 - In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed
- We are beneficiaries of Abraham's Covenant with God

8And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you." 9For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed."

Galatians 3:8-9 NRSV

- **Genesis 12:4-9: Abram's Obedience**

- **Abram obeyed**

4So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Note: he was 75 years old, Sara was barren (11:30), Lot was with him

- **More Revelation after Obedience**

Abram got more revelation after obeying.

This is a pattern that is common in Scripture.

The Lord showed him more of the plan when he got to Canaan

" 6Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, "To your offspring I will give this land."

- **Altars (Worship, Praise, Prayer)**

Abram built altars at significant points in his journey with God

- In Schechem

“So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him”

- In Bethel, where he pitched his tent

“8 and there he built an altar to the Lord and invoked the name of the Lord.”

- **Genesis 12:10-20: Famine in Canaan, Abram Goes to Egypt**

- **Abram’s Reaction to Famine (Tough Times)**

Up to this point, Abram was moving in lockstep with God’s instructions.

There is no clearly recorded instruction here, but he takes a step:

Was this a faith move?

10Now there was a famine in the land.

So Abram went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien, for the famine was severe in the land.

- **Abram’s Reaction to Threat of Danger - Sarai taken from him**

Abram comes up with a risky strategy to save his skin:

This was a fear reaction. Abraham had moved to Canaan by faith, but he didn’t seem to be acting by faith here.

“11When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know well that you are a woman beautiful in appearance; 12and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. 13Say you are my sister, so that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account.”

It might well be that Sarai was his sister or cousin in the extended family.

Abram’s plan worked - for a while.

- **Divine Protection & Deliverance**

“17But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. 18So Pharaoh called Abram, and said, “What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?”

- **Genesis 13:1-13 Discord and Separation of Abram & Lot;**
 - **Abram returns from Egypt to base - Bethel**

1So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb.

3He journeyed on by stages from the Negeb as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4to the place where he had made an altar at the first; and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

- **Covenant Blessings kick in**

2Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.

5Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, 6so that the land could not support both of them living together; for their possessions were so great that they could not live together,

- **Strife and Abram's Reaction**

- 7and there was strife between the herders of Abram's livestock and the herders of Lot's livestock.

- 8Then Abram said to Lot, “**Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herders and my herders; for we are kindred. 9Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left.**”

- Abraham made a No Strife Choice. What would your choice be if it was you?

- **Lot's Choice**
 - **10 Lot looked about him, and saw that the plain of the Jordan was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar; this was before the Lord had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. 11 So Lot chose for himself all the plain of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward; thus they separated from each other.** 12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the Plain and moved his tent as far as Sodom. 13 Now the people of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.
 - Lot's choice cost him dear later on.
 - He chose based on what looked good, and not principles of filial faithfulness, or what was the most godly option
 - Lot did not show his gracious Uncle Abram respect or much courtesy in this situation. He was clearly only interested in what was in it for him
- **Genesis 13:14-17 Renewed Covenant Promise to Abram**
 - After Lot separated from him, Abram must have felt quite low
 - The Lord comforted Abram and gave him fresh insights into his covenant.
 - Lot chose what looked good and to his maximum benefit. Abraham chose peace and no strife, and the Lord gave Abram an amazing experience of promise in return.
 - 4 The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Raise your eyes now, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; 15 for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. 16 I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. 17 Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you."

- **Genesis 14:1-17 Lot in Trouble; Abram to the Rescue**
 - War against Sodom & Gomorrah snares Lot - he and all he's got become captive as prisoners of war - v12
 - Abram untouched - he didn't live near Sodom
 - Abram goes to Lot's rescue v13-16 - how many would do that? Abram so blessed he had his own little army, and God's help.
 - Abraham was

- **Genesis 14:17-25 Abram & Melchizedek, Abram Tithes**
 - Abram gave tithes to the Priest after his victory
 - Note: this was before the Law of Moses - Abram tithed
 - 18And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. 19He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; 20and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" **And Abram gave him one tenth of everything.**

 - Christ Jesus is our High Priest, of the priestly order of Melchizedek
 - Hebrews 5:5 So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; 6 as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

3. Daily Study Schedule & Questions

- **Day 1: Genesis 11 - Tower of Babel, Genealogy of Shem & Abram**
As you read and study the verses, here are some suggestions of themes to reflect on - see the cross-references in other scripture:
 - What strikes you most about the story of the Tower of Babel
 - Lessons for our world today on unity and it's power from the story of Babel
 - Make note of the family of Abram and who all the relations are - their story permeates the rest of Genesis

- **Day 2: Genesis 12:1-3 Abram's Call by God**

Suggested reflection themes:

- How God calls Abram and how that applies to our lives today.
- Has God called you to a particular task in life, in church, etc.? How challenging has that been?
- What it takes to fulfil God's call
- Think about what blessings are ours today because of Abram's covenant. Can you list any to share with your group?
- **Homework:** Think about another character in the Bible and how God called them to a particular lifestyle or task. How does the person's call compare with Abram's

- **Day 3: Genesis 12:4-9: Abram's Obedience**

Suggested reflection themes:

- How God revealed more to Abram about God's plan
- Did God reveal everything at once to Abram? What did it take for him to get more revelation about his future?
- What lessons can you draw about this for yourself? Is there a call pending your obedience?
- The role of altars in Abram's story. What does that teach you about how to respond to God in your life's journey with God?

- **Day 4: 12:10-20: Famine in Canaan, Abram Goes to Egypt**

Suggested reflection themes:

- Abram's scheme to save himself and how that worked out
- Lessons we draw from this story about what to do in crisis or scary situations
- Divine protection and how God saved Abram and Sarai in this situation

- **Day 5: Genesis 13:1-13 Discord and Separation of Abram & Lot;**

Suggested reflection themes:

- How Abram dealt with family conflict

- How Lot dealt with family conflict
 - God's reaction to Abram's graciousness
 - What it must have taken for Abram to act the way he did
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- **Day 6: Genesis 14**
 - Suggested reflection themes:
 - Abram's reaction to Lot's capture - bearing in mind their previous separation
 - Abram's actions after winning victory
 - Should we tithe today? Is Abram's example worth following?
 - **Homework:** What is the importance of tithing?
 - **Homework:** Melchizedek and Christ - do some internet searches on who Melchizedek was and find other passages in the Bible that refer to him. How is Melchizedek related to Christ?