



Genesis 11-12

Noah had come forth out of the ark and it is now about four generations after the "flood." The population of the earth was not, as yet, very great; it was probably not more than eleven hundred adult males. The building of the Tower of Babel is just a little over a hundred years after the "flood."

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech, and it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there." (Gen.11:1-2). When Noah and his family came forth out of the flood they all spoke one language and it is commonly thought that the language was Hebrew. They journeyed from the east and some translate that as being eastward; because, if they were coming from the east then Mount Ararat would not have been in the location that it is today.

"And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly." (Gen.11:3a). A better translation would be "bake them thoroughly." Since they did not have a lot of stones to build with, there on the plains, they decided to make bricks. They made such good bricks that many of the structures, built at that time, are still standing today. In fact, there are those who believe they have found the Tower of Babel. After the confusion, mentioned here in Chapter 11, they went ahead and completed it. It was a ziggurat, which is, an ancient Mesopotamian temple tower consisting of a lofty pyramidal structure, built in successive stages with outside staircases and a shrine at the top. The intention was to follow the Zodiac and to communicate with heaven or have understanding of the heavens. It was really a perversion of the astrological message that God had placed in the stars.

"And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar." (Gen.11:3b). The slime was a tar-like substance or asphalt. This asphalt for mortar is what triggered the brain of John Rockefeller in thinking, "If there is asphalt, there must be oil." That is why Standard Oil Company began exploring for oil in the region of Iraq and tremendous oil deposits were found in the Middle East.

"And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." (Gen.11:4). The idea was to form a civilization, to create a community so that they would not be scattered abroad; but, it was God's command that they fill the earth, so, this was a rebellion against the commandment of God. They wanted to build this tower as a place of worship. There are many ruins of these towers still standing today in the area of Iraq and Iran.

"And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." (Gen.11:5-6). So soon after the flood, they had degraded into the worship of false gods. Babylon was the source of all false religions. As a result, the term Babylon is synonymous with a false religious system. In Revelation, Babylon is called the "mother of harlots." God saw that their minds were against Him and that they were seeking other gods.

"Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth." (Gen.11:7-9). The word "babel" has come to mean "confusion," for the Lord confounded their language and scattered them over the face of the earth.

Language is a very interesting thing. There are a few major families of languages, but the ability and capacity to communicate is peculiar to man. Languages are so diverse and different and it is interesting to hear people communicate in a language to which you have no reference point at all. It's amazing that they can share ideas and concepts with these sounds that mean nothing to us. Each tribe or nation, however primitive, has a language of their own and some of them are extremely complex. Even the tone or pitch can

change the meaning of the word. There are languages that use different parts of the vocal chords than we use. It becomes extremely difficult for us to even learn those languages because we are not used to using certain parts of our vocal chords. The capacity of communicating through the various languages is something that is exclusive with man and you won't find it in the animal kingdom at all. They have no advanced form of communication. They may have primitive forms of communicating but the capacity of full communication is exclusive to man. So, there was the confusion of the language and the scattering of the people over the face of the earth.

There are those who believe that it is quite possible that at this time the earth was divided or that the continental separation happened at this time. It is commonly called the "continental drift." We know that shortly after this period, many advanced forms of civilization sprung up, all over the earth, and varied techniques of building were used that are still a marvel today. The pyramids of Egypt were built shortly after this time and are still an engineering marvel. Experts have figured that the great pyramid was built about the time of Abraham. About this same period of time, the Indians were building pyramids over in Central America and Southern Mexico and their architectural style corresponded somewhat with those in Egypt. These engineering marvels have created great curiosity among scholars. Each of the nations, as they were scattered, carried their own stories of the flood and thus you find records of a great flood, universally throughout the world.

Earlier, we read some of the genealogies of Ham and Japheth and they had nothing to do with the coming Messiah. Now we are going to narrow down our genealogical trail and follow the family of Shem from which will come Abraham, from which will come the Messiah. The Bible was not intended to be a genealogical record of all the various tribes and families. It follows some of them for a few generations and then drops them. We are only interested in the line which leads us to Jesus Christ and all of the others can be set aside. Later on God tells us the Messiah will be from the line of David, the line of Judah, etc. God keeps narrowing down the line so that we don't have to trace a lot of genealogies.

It would be difficult for a person to lay a claim to being the Messiah, today. He would have to prove that he was of the tribe of Judah, the family of Jesse and that he was from the house of David, in order, to have a legitimate claim to being the Messiah. Since the time of Christ, there have been no genealogical charts kept; so, they can not really trace their roots. It would be impossible for someone to prove that he was from the tribe of Judah and the house of David; therefore, he could not lay an indisputable claim to being the Messiah. God didn't see any need to keep the records once Christ was born.

"These are the generations of Shem: Shem was an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad two years after the flood; And Shem lived after he begat Arphaxad five hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." (Gen.11:10-11). There are ten generations from Shem to Abraham and we find that Shem lived up to the time that Abraham was approximately fifty-eight years old. One interesting fact is that Shem lived to see his children to the ninth generation.

We have no real interest in the list of names in verses 12-25, but in verse 26 we read of Abraham's father. "And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran." (Gen.11:26). This verse tells us that Abram had two brothers. "Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. And Abram and Nahor took them 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." (Gen.11:27-30). Actually Nahor, Abram's brother, married his niece, the sister of Lot. Lot probably became attached to his uncle Abraham after the death of his father and Abraham, not having any children of his own, more or less adopted Lot and took care of him.

"And Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran." (Gen.11:31-32). Now we have, what appears to be, a discrepancy in the scripture;

for, we read that Abraham was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran to go on to the land. It would appear that Terah was seventy years old when Abraham was born, per verse 26, but it could be that Abraham was not the first born, but only listed first. Haran may have been the first born and Abraham may not have been born until his father was one hundred and thirty-five years old.

In the Book of Acts, as Stephen is talking about this incident in Haran, Stephen tells us that they were there until Terah was dead and then after his death, Abraham went on to the "Promise Land." If Abraham was born when Terah was seventy years old and left the city of Haran when he was seventy-five, that means that Terah was only about one hundred and forty-five years old and lived some sixty years after Abraham left. This creates a problem, as you can see; but, there are two possible solutions: (1) Abraham was not the first born son and Terah begat Abraham when he was one hundred thirty-five years old; and (2) Stephen, referring to Terah being dead, was speaking of his spiritual condition and was referring to him being dead to God and the things of God. Abraham, finally realizing the spiritual deadness of Terah, left him in Haran and moved on to the land that God had promised.

Earlier in this chapter, we said that Babylon was the source of all false religions and the people had many gods. Life is created, in a sense, through sexual union. Many of the worship services to these gods involved sexual rites. They worshipped the goddess of the Moon and various other heavenly bodies; they also deified their kings. Nimrod became Marduke and was one of the chief gods of the Babylonians. In the worship of the moon goddess, Ishtar; temple priestesses, actually prostitutes, held various kinds of sexual rites and a woman belonging to that religion had to participate in these temple rites at sometime in her life. This could be where the moon became associated with romance. Terah, Abraham's father, was a worshiper of these early Babylonian practices.

Ur of the Chaldees, birthplace of Abraham, was in the southern part of the Babylonian Plain. The city of Haran might have been established by Abraham's brother, Haran. Terah, in making the journey to Haran, could have had some business to take care of before going on to the "land of promise." Another possibility, Terah may have insisted that Abraham go as far as Haran with him and then go on alone to Canaan. Haran is approximately six hundred and ten miles from Ur of the Chaldees, which was a pretty good journey, in those days, considering there was no form of rapid transit. If Abraham had gone from Ur of the Chaldees to Canaan, that would have been about a six hundred mile trip directly west, but instead he went northwest, a distance of six hundred and ten miles, with his father to Haran. We can only speculate why they dwelt at Haran for this interval, because the scripture does not tell us.

"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." (Gen.12:1). You can see that Abraham was not fully obedient to God. He didn't leave his father, nor his family, nor did he leave the land. Haran was still in the land of Babylon, so, Abraham failed to be fully obedient to God. When we come to the New Testament and we read of Abraham, he is given to us as the classic example of the man of faith. Faith is always marked by obedience. Abraham's faith is held up as an example to us. In the New Testament, the lapses and failure of his faith are not mentioned. In the New Testament, God overlooks the failures, the lapses of his faith, and only tells us of the triumphs of his faith.

I am glad that God uses imperfect people. If Abraham had been totally perfect (no wavering of faith) then it would be a discouragement to us. I would think that God couldn't use me, because of all my imperfections. We might be prone to make excuses, for the failure of committing ourselves to His service, because we are imperfect. But, God uses imperfect vessels; He used Abraham. We can't disqualify ourselves because of imperfections, because, God uses yielded vessels not perfect vessels. That doesn't mean that God doesn't seek to change us. He wants to mold us into that image of Jesus Christ. How many of us can testify that we are completely perfected in Christ? We never get angry or upset and we always have the sweetest dispositions and are great to be around at all times. We realize we can't say that and we do have imperfections. We sometimes question the things of God and we don't always trust God completely. Difficulties arise and we try to figure our way out of them instead of trusting in God to see us through the

problem.

So, Abraham did not make the total break that God commanded. It is rather comforting that God will take me in the state that I am and begin His work in me as He begins, by His Spirit, to change me and transform me into that image of Christ, but He uses me though I am not perfect. He will use you too when you are yielded to Him and rather than look at our weaknesses; we need to look at our Creator. God wants to use each individual and He has given Abraham to us as an example of faith, even though he was imperfect.

The name, Terah, means delay. The plan that God had for Abraham was delayed by his father. Abraham was attached to his father and did not leave him until he died, whether physically or spiritually we don't know; Abraham left Haran after the death of Terah. God told Abraham to get out of his country and go to a land that He would show him. "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen.12:2-3). God promised that from Abraham a great nation would come forth. God's promises are not predicated upon Abraham's goodness, but upon the grace of God.

God doesn't bless us because we're good, but His blessings come to us by virtue of His grace. We are often of the mental frame that God only blesses us when we are good and so we never expect God to bless us. We have this hang up that God only blesses, as a reward for our goodness; but, we find that the blessings of God are given to us by His grace. It was by the grace of God that He called Abraham. It was by the grace of God that He called you and He blesses you by His grace. It is not by merit of our works or our faithfulness or diligence, but by His grace I experience and receive the blessings of God. We don't expect God to bless us for what we are but for what He is. God is love and He loves us.

God said He would make Abraham's name great and to this day Abraham's name is great to the Jew, the Mohammedan and to the Christian. We all look back to Abraham as our father and the greatness of this man who believed and trusted in God. The three major religions of the world all honor and respect the man, Abraham. It is interesting that every nation that has persecuted the Jew later goes into a decline. Spain, after the Inquisition, was reduced to a fifth rate nation; Rome soon fell after beginning to persecute the Jews; the Greek civilization, after defaming the temple, fell; and of course, Germany, of more recent history, fell from being a great power as a result of persecuting the Jews. I believe part of the blessing of the United States is that we have become a refuge to the persecuted Jew. The blessing of Abraham is to come upon all the families of the earth and we are blessed today because of Jesus Christ, who was born of the seed of Abraham.

"So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him; and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came." (Gen.12:4-5). Abraham is now leaving Haran, but he is taking Lot with him. God said he was to leave his family, but Lot is going along and is, probably, like a son to Abraham. Now Abraham was no young kid, at this time, he was seventy-five years old and it seems that they became prosperous in Haran, acquiring servants and goods. This could have been one of the reasons that Terah wanted to linger in Haran. "And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanites was then in the land." (Gen.12:6). Shechem is just about the center of the country.

"And the LORD appeared unto Abram..." Stephen tells us, in Acts, that the God of glory appeared to him while he was still in Mesopotamia and told him to get out of the land. There are seven references here in Genesis of the LORD appearing to Abraham. These appearances of God to Abraham are actually progressive and make an interesting study. Abraham is being drawn into a deeper communion and fellowship with God. The first appearance in Babylon when God told him to get out of the land, he was brought into the fellowship with the "discontent of God." God was not content with what was happening in Babylon. He caused this same discontent within Abraham so that he would search out another place to worship God. Now, Abraham comes into the land. God did not deal with Abraham while he was in Haran.

I think that we should take note how the work of God in our life can be stalled by our disobedience. God leads us step by step. I wish God would lay out the whole plan that He has for my future. I would appreciate God letting me know what plans He has for me this year so I can make my plans accordingly. If I only knew a little further in advance it would help me a lot in planning my future, but God only gives us one step at a time. The next step isn't given until you've taken the one He just gave you. If you don't take it but question God instead, He is silent until you obey, then He gives you the next step.

In the Book of Acts, when Philip was in Samaria having a tremendous revival meeting and many were being saved and baptized, the angel of the Lord spoke to him and told him to go down to Gaza. "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went; and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him..." (Acts 8:26-31). Now the Lord didn't tell Philip to go to Gaza and when you get there you will see a chariot going south, go join yourself to the chariot; there will be a high ranking official there who will later be baptized. The Lord didn't lay the whole plan out, He just said to go to Gaza.

I can see where Philip would have good grounds to question the sanity of God. "Hey God! There's nobody in Gaza, that place is deserted, but people are being saved here in Samaria. There's a revival going on here and the potential is great. Why would you want me to go to the desert? It doesn't seem sensible to leave a tremendous revival to go off to the desert, but when Philip had taken the first step then God gave him the next step. That is the way the Lord works and so, God called Abraham to leave the land and Abraham went to Haran and dwelt there. It is interesting to note that God didn't speak to him all the time he was in Haran nor did He appear to him again until he came into Canaan. Now that Abraham is in the land, God begins to deal with him again. When you have been obedient to the first step that God gives you, then He can deal with you again and give you the next step. The walk of faith is one step at a time.

"And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land; and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him." (Gen.12:7). Abraham didn't know where he was going, but here in Shechem he built an altar unto the Lord and the Lord appeared to him and told him this was the land that He would give to his descendants.

"And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Ai on the east; and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south. And there was a famine in the land; and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land." (Gen.12:8-10). I believe that this was a lapse of faith in going down to Egypt. God was testing Abraham in this famine. "Do you believe me, Abraham? I've led you to the land, do you believe that I can sustain you in the land? Abraham flunked the test, because he went down to Egypt. Paul, in writing to the Galatians said, "Hey you started well, what hindered you?" (paraphrased). That's the case of a lot of people. You get a good start but then suddenly you think, whoa! What am I doing here? What am I going to do now? And so, we go down to Egypt.

"And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon." (Gen.12:11). That's a great thing for a husband to say to his wife, "You're a beautiful woman." Sarai was at least sixty-five years old at this time. She was fair skinned and that was considered a mark of beauty among the darker skinned people. "Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife; and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister; that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee." (Gen. 12:12-13). Does this sound like a man of tremendous faith in God?

Remember! He's the father of all who believe. Let's recognize the fact that Abraham didn't have this great faith all at once. It was something that grew.

Don't be disappointed if you don't have all this "great faith" the moment you begin your walk with the Lord. Our expectations of ourselves are many times unrealistic in spiritual development and growth. I am so accustomed to "instant" things. Living in this revved up society everything is instant. I want instant faith! I want to be an instant giant! I want God to give me some kind of an inoculation of faith and Shazam! I've got super-faith. We think if we only had the faith of Abraham, but that faith was something that developed over a process of time as he discovered the faithfulness of God. It was through fellowship with God and knowing God, faith developed; as your faith also will develop through fellowship with God. The Bible says to grow in faith and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The growth of your faith corresponds with the growth of your knowledge of God. The more you know Him, the more you will trust Him and the more your faith will increase. There were many failures in this man's life of faith, but God still used him. God shows us the weaknesses as well as the triumphs of Abraham. Your faith is not perfect yet, but it should be growing as you walk with God and experience His faithfulness.

"And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair, The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house, And he entreated Abram well for her sake; and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels, And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife." (Gen.12:14-17). So, God was faithful, but Abraham wasn't. He turned Sarai over to the Pharaoh, but God intervened and plagued the house of Pharaoh.

"And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, She is my sister? So I might have taken her to me to wife; now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way, And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had." (Gen.12:18-20). Abraham was expelled from Egypt. An interesting insight is that the Bible doesn't have to tell us of this failure of Abraham, because, when we read the New Testament, in Hebrews, Hall of Faith, it only speaks of his triumphs of faith and not of his failures.

When God finally writes the records of your faith, He will record only your triumphs. All your failures of faith will be buried. With Abraham, the Word of God lasting forever, his failures will never be buried; but, God has buried your failures. God accounts us righteous in and through Jesus Christ. Our believing and trusting in Jesus, is counted to us for righteousness. Even as God accounted Abraham's faith for righteousness so does He account our faith for righteousness. Even though Abraham's faith was not perfect and ours is not yet perfected, when God makes His final accounting; He reckons that faithfulness to His promise and His work and blots out our sin and our failure. If you think that this is a license to live a shabby life, it's not. It's for that earnest struggling soul that's being condemned by the enemy for their failures and for their weaknesses. It's a word of encouragement for that person who is being beaten down by the enemy that God is faithful and will bless you because He is a gracious, loving, compassionate God. The blessings of God are a result of the grace of God and not a reward for your goodness.