

THE LINE OF PROMISE

Genesis 11:10-32

INTRODUCTION

There was a homeless man in Salt Lake City a few years ago in 2010. His name was Max Melitzer and he was a 65 year old man who had been homeless for decades. Max and his brother had lost touch with one another for years. His brother died and left him an inheritance of \$100,000. The family hired a private investigator to look for Max. After a year, they eventually found him in a Salt Lake City park. The investigator told him the good news and then took him out for a seafood dinner.

For a whole year, Max had wandered around Salt Lake City as a homeless rich man. His needs were met, but he didn't know it. The private investigator who found him didn't make him rich. He already was, but he didn't know it. Due to nothing more than not knowing what rightfully belonged to him, Max missed approximately 365 good nights sleep, over 1000 good meals, and 365 hot showers.

As Christians, we need to understand our inheritance. Not just what awaits us in Heaven but also, we need to understand what it means right now as we live. Our deliverance from the penalty of sin, the fear of death and from whence it came!

READ Gen 11:10-26

Proposition: 2 Men in the Line of Promise:

- I. Shem**
- II. Terah**

So That:

1st Man in the Line of Promise....

- I. The Generations of Shem 11:10-26**

Point – **Genealogy and Longevity**

A. Genealogy

Point – Linear genealogy - from Noah to Abram

- important for thrones or inheritances
- 10 generations from Shem to Abram ending with 3 sons (same pattern as from Adam to Noah in chapter 5)
- of the three sons of Noah, Shem is the line of promise
- God’s favor rests upon him (end of Chapter 10)

Proof – tAdl.At (*toledoth*) of Shem – 2nd shortest (after Ishmael)
To one of the two longest – Terah (along with Jacob)

Heavens and Earth	2:4–4:26
Adam	5:1–6:8
Noah	6:9–9:27
Sons of Noah	10:1–11:9
Shem	11:10–26

Terah (Abram)	11:27–25:11
Ishmael	25:12–18
Isaac	25:19–35:29
Esau	36:1–37:1
Jacob (Joseph and 12 sons)	37:2–50:14

This passage is the second vertical genealogy (after chapt 5) in Scripture. It follows the same pattern as the first - 10 names and ends with the names of 3 sons.

There are some key names we have already seen in Chapter 10:

Eber – the name from which we get the word Hebrew

Peleg - he was the only one of the 70 names we encountered back in Ch. 10 whom God gave an explanation of his name - “the earth was divided” (Tower or Babel)

Similar formula to the phrases written in Ch. 5 **except**

- “So all the days of _____ were _____ years, and he died”
- total number of years of the person is given and then he died
- exception is Enoch

In Ch. 5, death reigns because of the fall of man, the rebellion of Adam and Eve, man’s sin.

In Ch. 11, God doesn’t bring that out. He wants us to understand and grasp that the promise endures.

The age of death is omitted.

“and he died” is omitted - Chapter 5 – Death Reigns
Chapter 11 – Promise Endures

Movement away from death and penalty to life and promise

The *toledoth* of Adam emphasizes God’s word of death is true.
The *toledoth* of Shem emphasizes God’s word of life is true.

But ... there is a shortening of Man’s days on Earth ...

B. Longevity

Point – Major drop in longevity

Proof – 10 generations

Shem	600	-	600
Arpachshad	438		
Shelah	433		- 3 400’s
Eber	464		
Peleg	239		
Reu	239		
Serug	230	-	low 200’s, upper 100’s
Nahor	148		
Terah	205		
Abram	175		

In Ch. 5, the average age (not including **Enoch**) is 912 years.

Drop in longevity #1 from **Shem** to **Eber** - after the flood
Life span is decreasing – no radiation filtering canopy, genetic and somatic mutations increased, more rugged environment, inadequate nutrition, inbreeding, greater stress of living, etc.

Drop in longevity #2 between **Eber** and **Peleg**.

- lifespans are cut in half
- from 400s to 200s
- a result of the trauma inflicted on humanity by the Dispersion.
- Gen 10:25 – “In his days, the earth was divided.”

This was an extremely traumatic experience for the entire human race, and it is not surprising that it would have severe physical effects on mankind in general.

In addition to the difficulty of mere survival under the new conditions of living in small tribal communities, the effects of the genetic mutations that had been accumulating for several generations since the Flood were much aggravated by the necessity of close inbreeding.

Illustration - I remember late in the year 1999, all of the Y2K hysteria. Christian friends asked us what we are doing for Y2K? I resisted the urge to respond back with, “Remain level-headed.” They said they had a pantry stocked with food and they were going to share their surplus of food with an elderly neighbor so they could then share the gospel. I asked them, “Well ... if the technological apocalypse doesn't come, are you going to wait until Y3K for another opportunity to evangelize him?”

If you are 14 years or older, your life has bridged across two different millennia. That is unbelievably unique. That is significant from a time perspective.

Illustration - The land of Israel has been called the bridge between the continents - between Africa, Asia and Europe.

In the same way, figuratively speaking, as we move from v. 26 to v. 27, we are moving from one millennium to another, from one continent to another. That is to say, this is significant!

2nd Man ...

II. The Generations of Terah 11:27-32

READ Gen 11:27-32

Point – This is a major transition in Genesis.

- This is a new section.
- The transition from the first to the second half of the Book of Beginnings.

Point – The Land(s) of **Paganism**, The Land of **Promise**

- Land plays a prominent role here.

A. The Land(s) of Paganism

Proof –

“^{27a}**Now these are *the records of the generations of Terah.***”

tAdl.At (*toledoth*) of Terah 11:27-25:11

Terah – is the 10th generation from **Noah**

“^{27b}**Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot.**”

The three sons are listed in both v. 26 and v. 27.

- brings out significance of newness of *toledoth* beginning in 27

Nahor – is the grandfather of **Rebekah**, great-grandfather of **Rachel** and **Leah**

- when Abraham sends his unnamed servant to find a bride for Isaac, where does he send him? “The city of Nahor” Gen 24:10

Lot – is the nephew of Abram

Abram – his name means “exalted father”

He is listed first because he is the line of Promise

- his name is changed later by God to Abraham - Father of many nations

At this point, the discerning reader might have picked up the beginning of a theme up in Genesis. So far, the favored son has not been the chronologically firstborn son (Abel, Shem)

Abram was not the firstborn (chronologically)

Gen 11:26 - Terah is 70 years old when started having children

Gen 11:32 - Terah died at 205 years of age

Gen 12:4 - Abram is 75 years old when Terah died

The first eleven chapters in Genesis, the foundation of all foundations, takes us from Creation to Abraham.

More than one third of history is covered in these eleven chapters!

1–11 **Primeval History** (Original or First)

12–50 **Patriarchal History** (Abraham to Joseph)

11:27 begins a new division in Genesis.

- Genesis can be structured by tracing four great events and four great people.
- The four great events in chapters 1-11: **Creation, Fall, Flood, and Dispersion.**
- The four great people complete the book in chapters 12-50: **Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.**

God’s first concern is all the people of the world (Gen 1-11), but the focus of Genesis (and the rest of the Old Testament) is on God’s choice and care of His chosen people, Israel (Gen 12-50). This sovereign choice begins with the call of **Abram**. The book of Genesis covers more than 2,000 years and more than 20

generations; yet, it spends almost a third of its text on the life of this one man (11:27-25:18).

“²⁸And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. ²⁹And 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. ³⁰And Sarai was barren; she had no child.”

Sarai – “princess”

–she is the half-sister of Abram (20:12), same father/different mother

Milcah was **Nahor**'s niece, the daughter of **Haran**

Milcah had a grandson named **Laban**. He had two daughters, two great-granddaughters of **Milcah** ... named **Leah** and **Rachel**.

Point – Land of Paganism = “**Ur of the Chaldeans**”

“**Ur of the Chaldeans**” – most likely 150 miles SE of Babylon, in-between Babylon and the Persian Gulf

- we know from archeology and from secular history that Ur of the Chaldeans and Haran were centers of pagan moon deity worship

Terah – might mean “moon,” although not certain.

Josh 24:2 – “And 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.’””

Illustration – The Forty Martyrs of Sabaste – 40 Christians soldiers were members of the 12th Legion of Rome’s imperial army in A.D. 320. One day, Emperor Licinius sent out a command that all soldiers were to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. These

Christian soldiers replied, “You can have our armor and even our bodies, but our hearts’ allegiance belongs to Jesus Christ.”

It was the middle of winter. The captain stripped them of their clothes and marched them onto a frozen lake. They would either renounce Christ or die. Throughout the night, these men huddled together singing Christian songs. One by one the temperature took its toll and they fell to the ice.

At last, there was only one man left. He lost courage and stumbled to the shore, where he renounced Christ. The officer of the guards had been watching all this. Unknown to the others, he had secretly come to believe in Christ as he heard the songs of the soldiers and God pierced his heart. When he saw this last man break rank, he walked out onto the ice, threw off his clothes, and confessed he also was a Christian.

When the sun rose the next morning, there were forty bodies of soldiers who had fought to the death for Christ.

Application – Sometimes praise demands a sacrifice. You have to be willing to forsake all. Terah, Abram, Sarai and Lot leave the land of paganism to the.....

B. The Land of Promise

Proof – Gen 11:31-32 – “And 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. ³²And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.”

Both **Ur** and **Haran** were centers of moon worship.

“they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan”

- their noble intent
- **Terah, Abram, Sarai, and Lot** don't go directly west across the Arabian desert with flocks and herds. They travel NW along the Euphrates River around the **Fertile Crescent**.

The Fertile Crescent is a crescent-shaped region containing the moist and fertile land of otherwise arid and semi-arid Western Asia, and the Nile Valley and Nile Delta of northeast Africa.

- includes Mesopotamia, the land in and around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.
- modern day countries in the Fertile Crescent are Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Cyprus, and Egypt, besides the southeastern fringe of Turkey and the western fringes of Iran.

→ From the Land of Paganism to the Land of Promise!

Land of Promise = "**land of Canaan**" - The Promised Land

Illustration – “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

*That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.*

→ We must be willing to forsake anything!

→ **That was the intent of Terah, Abram, Sarai and Lot, but we have some huge problems here.**

1) We're in the wrong land.

Terah, Abram, Sarai, Lot don't make it to the Promised Land. They stop short in "**Haran and settled there**"

2) We have a barren womb.

Sarai is barren.

Barrenness - huge issue - it's a stage, a platform for God to show His glory throughout Scripture.

- 16:2; 25:21; 29:31; Jgs 13:2; I Sam 1:5; 2:5

3) There is no descendant.

The only descendant listed so far is **Lot**, the son of **Haran**. He is listed seemingly because his father **Haran** died prematurely.

This sets the stage for chapter 12 and the movement of the Grace of God, the promise of God to come.

There are some fantastic sermons in Acts including **Peter's** on the Day of Pentecost at the birth of the church. Another one is **Stephen's** in Acts 7, before he was martyred.

Turn to: Acts 7:1-4

Application – How does Stephen begin his sermon??? Is this passage we are studying in Genesis important???

Absolutely! We know it matters because it is in the Word of God. But it is also used by Stephen as he faced death by stoning.

CONCLUSION

God's election of one man who responded by faith – example of faith throughout Bible (Rom, James, etc.)

We can't all be a lawgiver like Moses.

We can't all be a King like David.

We can't all be a General like Joshua.

We can't all be a Prophet

... but we can all have faith ... like Abraham.

We can hear the Word of God.

We can believe the Word of God.

We can become intimate with God

... And we can be called a friend of God ... like Abraham.

Three times in Scripture - 2 Chr 20:7, Isaiah 41:8 and James 2:23 - Abraham is called a friend of God.

God used a childless man and woman, with a pagan background, to bring about the greatest and most wonderful event that ever occurred.

Illustration – There were two little girls playing together in the sandbox, and they were counting their pennies. One said, “I have five pennies.” The other said, “I have ten.” “No,” said the first little girl, “You have just five cents, the same as I.” “But,” the second child quickly replied, “my father said that when he came home tonight, he would give me five cents, and so I have ten cents.” The child’s faith gave her proof of that which she did not as yet see, and she counted it as being already hers, because it had been already promised by her father.

Remember your inheritance!

What awaits you.

From whence you came.

11/2/14