

Session 11: A Name

Genesis 10 - Genealogy

Will Shem be the promised seed?

- “Shem” = name in Hebrew
- We see mankind continue to grow in Genesis 10.
- The focus is on Noah’s family records.
- Genesis 11 is mankind trying to make a “name” for itself.

“the author uses allusions to past narratives to retain the reader’s focus on the major points of the narrative - in this case [Genesis 19:21], the line of the blessing.” - John Sailhamer

“One line leads to the building of Babylon and the other to the family of Abraham...As throughout the biblical text, the ‘land’ is often a reference to the ‘inhabitants of the land’ Thus, not only is the land divided in the confusion of languages (11:1), but more fundamentally, two great lines of humanity diverge from the midst of the sons of Shem. Those who seek to make a name (11:4) for themselves in the building of Babylon and those for whom God will make a name (12:2) in the call of Abraham.” - John Sailhamer

“The focus of the author since the beginning chapters of Genesis has been both on God’s plan to bless humankind by providing them with that which is ‘good’ and on the human failure to trust God and enjoy the ‘good’ that God had provided.” - John Sailhamer

“Among Shem’s offspring came Eber, from which the name Hebrew was derived (cf. 10:21).” - R. Kent Hughes

Genesis 11 - Tower of Babel

Chiasm in Genesis 11

“The whole earth had one language (v. 1)

“there” (v. 2)

“each other” (v. 3)

“Come, let us make bricks” (v. 3)

“let us build for ourselves” (v. 4)

“a city and a tower”

“the LORD came down...” (v. 5)

“the city and the tower”

“which mankind had built”

“come...let us mix up” (v. 7)

“each other’s language”

“from there” (v. 8)

“the language of the whole earth” (v. 9)

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"The careful structure is matched by a painstaking use of words and wordplays through assonance (words that sound the same), rhyme, and alliteration, which of course are hidden in the Hebrew. The result is a remarkably subtle and powerful story that leaves its mark on the hearers. This story of Babel also mirrors humanity's attempt in Eden to grasp power apart from God. The tower builder's attempt to exceed proscribed human limits is much like Eve's desire for the tree (cf. 3:5, 6). The use of the divine plural ("Come, let us go down," v. 7) reflects similar language in Eden ("The man has become like one of us," 3:22), and both instances focus on God's concern about what will happen to humanity." - R. Kent Hughes

"Genesis 1-11 then has come full circle from 'Eden to Babel,' both remembered for the expulsion of their residents." - Kenneth A. Mathews

"Yahweh must draw near, not because he is near-sighted, but because he dwells at such tremendous heights and their work is so tiny." - Otto Procksch

Will Abram (11:26) be the promised seed?

Genesis 12 - Promise to Abram

*Go out from your land,
your relatives
and your father's house
to the land that I will show you.
I will make you into a great nation,
I will bless you,
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
I will curse those who treat you with contempt,
and all the peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.*
- Genesis 12:1-3

"God may call us to make a major change of direction in life as we follow Him. These changes can stretch us in ways that bring discomfort and force us to trust Him with the new and unknown." - Explore the Bible

"He was to leave all familiarity of home and go to a place that he knew nothing about. He was to obey the Lord even though it would involve life-altering changes. This Bible passage reminds us of the importance of trusting God in the big and hard issues of life. We are encouraged to trust God even when we don't know exactly where He is leading. We are encouraged to obey God even when that means some difficult and uncomfortable changes. Living the faith of life in God is a life of great adventure and blessing." - Explore the Bible

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By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed and went out to a place he was going to receive as an inheritance. He went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed as a foreigner in the land of promise, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, co-heirs of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that had foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith even Sarah herself, when she was unable to have children, received power to conceive offspring, even though she was past the age, since she considered that the One who had promised was faithful. Therefore, from one man - in fact, from one as good as dead - came offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as innumerable as the grains of sand by the seashore. These all died in faith without having received the promises, but they saw them from a distance, greeted them, and confessed that they were foreigners and temporary residents on the earth. - Hebrews 11:8-13

What are some examples of difficult things God may call us to do today? How do these things compare with the directive given to Abram?

God...

- Clearly communicated what He expected of him.
- Emphasized the magnitude of what He was asking of Abram.
- Further pointed out to Abram that he was to follow this call of obedience even though he did not know the final destination.
- Calls us to radical obedience, to live by faith and obey His word.

...And you will be a blessing to others (v. 2)

- “God also spoke to Abram about the responsibility that comes with blessings. The blessings Abram would receive were not only for him. He was blessed by God in order to be a blessing to others. Life is about more than just what we get. It is about what we give.” - Explore the Bible

...And all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you (v. 3)

- That includes us!
- This blessing is specifically referenced before the establishment of the Israelites.

In what ways can our obedient faith be a blessing to others?

What is God asking you to do that will stretch your faith in Him? What roadblocks are keeping you from taking steps of obedience?

“Though he is on the verge of narrowing his focus to the ‘seed of Abraham’ and the ‘Israelites,’ the author first lays a solid foundation for his ultimate purpose of God’s choosing Abraham: through his ‘seed’ God’s blessing will be restored to ‘all the families of the earth’ (12:3).” - John Sailhamer