

## Genesis: The Tower & Faith

What is the purpose of going back over the Old Testament but for the lessons those passages teach us and the morals we can glean from them.

**Rom 15:4** For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Our last lesson from Genesis on the flood now takes us into the post-flood era when Noah's family of three sons and their wives began fulfilling God's command to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (*Gen 9:1*).

**Gen 10:32** ... from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.

But something happened along the way that made them cease from expanding into the whole world.

**Gen 11:1** Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. **2** And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar (*shin-awr*) and settled there. **3** And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. **4** Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."

What happened to God's command to "fill the earth"?

*"A desire for personal fame prevents one from truly giving God the glory."*

Gary Hampton

This would have been a great undertaking which would have required the cooperation of all able bodied individuals in order to complete it. They had the materials to accomplish "every intention of the thoughts of [their hearts]", but sadly it was "only evil continually" (*Gen 6:5*). Man's wicked ways had survived the flood. There was nothing wrong with building anything as long as whatever they built was **not** constructed in order to quell their fears or satisfy their own egos. On top of that, they weren't "[being] fruitful" and "[filling] the earth" as their forefathers were told they were to do.

**Gen 11:5** And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the **children of man** had built. (*Notice how the 'children of God' had no interest in such vanity.*)

Why would God have to personally inspect the building of the tower? Actually, He didn't. So why did He allow them to even begin building it in the first place? He may have given them time in which to think about what they were doing and let them come to the conclusion that their actions were wrong, thus nobody could say they weren't given the opportunity to change their minds. He knew all about what was going to happen and used their disobedience to fulfill His Providential plan to ultimately save man. Just as He did with Pharaoh to save the Israelites. It was to make His name known throughout the earth.

Rom 9:17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show My power in you, and that My Name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

And besides, the people were the ones who needed the benefit of His presence in order for them to understand the depth of their rebellion.

*"The people were united because of their common ancestors and language. Their unity had produced one great act of rebellion. God saw men would continue to use unity in a bad way. No form of rebellion would be out of the realm of possibility. Therefore, he resolved to confuse the languages."*

Gary Hampton

Gen 11:6 And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. 7 Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech."

Just as God said "let Us make man in Our image" (1:26) He again enlists the three Persons of the Godhead. As He would later question Moses after Moses made the excuse that he was "slow of speech and of tongue", God asked "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?" (Ex 4:10-11)

Gen 11:8 So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. 9 Therefore its name was called Babel (Heb.894- confusion), because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

The apostle Paul would later be called a "babbler" by "some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers". They along with some others were confused saying "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"--because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.' (Act 17:18) But even before "Paul [was] called by the will of God to be an apostle" (1 Cor 1:1) there came a time in history where God would amend this miraculous confusion of languages on another occasion that would stun the then known world. Jesus had "ordered [His disciples] not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father" to "be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from [then]" (Act 1:4-5). At that He ascended and when ten days had expired and "the day of Pentecost arrived" (2:1) "they (the apostles as per 1:26) were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (Gk.1100- language) as the Spirit gave them utterance" (v. 4). This was not some sort of gibberish speaking as many of the charismatic denominations teach. These were actual spoken languages that existed throughout the world at that time. For the apostles, who were known to be merely "Galileans" (2:7), to be able to speak so many languages, this could only be accomplished by such an outpouring of the Spirit. It gave the apostles of Christ the ability on such an occasion to share the message of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus to such a huge gathering of Jews, "devout men from every nation under heaven" (2:5). They were the first to receive the gospel message (Rom 1:16) that "the New Covenant [in Christ's] blood" (Lk 22:20) became the final sacrifice thus fulfilling the law "by canceling the record of debt that stood against [them] with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Col 2:14). It all happened according to Providence and "as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in Heaven and things in earth" (Eph 1:10).

Act 2: 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"

From the beginning man had "one language" in order to communicate and thus multiply as they were commanded. But God confused their communication during the building of the tower in order for them to leave its construction and obey His commandment to "fill the earth". However, on the day of Pentecost He gave the apostles the ability to speak in several languages in order to bring His creation together for a common good in order to save them. Speaking in several languages, they were able to get the attention of those present for the Feast of Pentecost, those who came for the Passover 50 days earlier, who knew of and/or agreed to the crucifixion of Christ, and who would then have their hearts goaded in order to ask the apostles "Brothers, what shall we do?" (2:37) Being able to translate the gospel into the multitudes of languages, "Peter, standing with the eleven" (2:14), told them of the only thing that would save them, which is the only means by which anyone can be saved even today.

Act 2:38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself."

Peter would later write, concerning the flood, that "baptism, which now corresponds with this (the flood), now saves you" (1 Pet 3:21). But going back to the genealogies before the flood that led up to the building of the tower of Babel, and later the birth of Abram, there are some interesting things to be understood concerning how long each generation began to decrease in their respective ages.

#### From Noah, through Shem to Abram

Noah was 500 years old when Shem was born (Gen 5:32). He then lived to be 950 years old (Gen 9:29). He lived for 60 years after the birth of Abram. Shem, who lived to be 600 years old, lived 110 years after Abram was born according to the genealogy of Gen 11:10-26. He would have been around for about ten years after Isaac was born and outlived Terah. Generations shortly after those of the survivors of the flood began to shorten since it's known that Terah, Abram's father, only lived to be 205 years old (Gen 11:32).

*"The human population went through a severe genetic bottleneck at the time of the Flood—only eight individuals."*

The Bible, Science, and the Ages of the Patriarchs by Bert Thompson, Ph.D.,  
Apologetics Press 2001

Noah and his family would have lived through the divided languages that resulted from the building of the tower of Babel (*pronounced baw-bel'*). Even within the different clans of Japheth, Ham and Shem there were multiple languages (10:5, 20, 31). But could you even imagine seeing your great-great grandchildren let alone those beyond that? Noah, through Shem, as an 8<sup>th</sup> great-grandfather, would have been able to witness the birth of Abram. For the remainder of Noah's life, how often do you think he would have told the story of the ark to his grandchildren and their children and so on? So when Abram was born, Noah had 60 years in which Abram would have been able to sit at his feet to hear it. But God had plans for Abram, to make his name known, just as He did for Noah.

**Gen 12:1** 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. **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**.

Even the New Testament spoke of the faith of **Abraham** as the faith we are to emulate.

**Heb 11:8** By faith **Abraham** obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. **9** By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with **Isaac** and **Jacob**, heirs with him of the same promise. **10** For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, **Whose Designer** and builder is **God**.

In obeying **God**, **Abraham** knew there was something more than the land of promise his seed would receive. We also can understand that there is a life beyond this one, but we can only realize it through faith that it truly exists.

**Abram's father Terah** had "died in Haran" (*Gen 11:32*) so **Abram** moved on as he was directed by **God** (*12:1*). Passing through Canaan he sojourned in Egypt (*v. 10*) because of a great famine. So...

**Gen 12:11** When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to **Sarai** (*saw-rah'ee*) his wife, "I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, **12** and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. **13** Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake." **14** When **Abram** entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful.

**Sarai** would have been sixty-five since "**Abram** was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran" (*12:4*) and she was ten years younger than he was (*17:17*). Even at that age she must have been so attractive that **Abram** had to ask her to "say you are my sister". He was not only concerned for his own welfare but for hers as well. If he would have been killed because of her beauty she would have ended up among a nation of godless idol worshippers. So...

**Gen 12:15** ...when the princes of **Pharaoh** saw her, they praised her to **Pharaoh**. And the woman was taken into **Pharaoh's** house. **16** And for her sake he dealt well with **Abram**; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels. **17** But the **LORD** afflicted **Pharaoh** and his house with great plagues because of **Sarai**, **Abram's** wife. **18** So **Pharaoh** called **Abram** and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? **19** Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go." **20** And **Pharaoh** gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had.

By this time **Abram** was amassing quite a fortune from whatever land he dwelt in, as he was told he would by the **Lord** (*12:3*). **Abram**, then **Abraham** (*17:5*), would again, later to **Abimelech** king of Gerar, state that **Sarai**, then **Sarah** (*17:15*), was his sister for fear of them taking his life in order to have her because of **Sarah's** beauty. At that time she would have been

ninety years old and her beauty would not have diminished. But was he lying about her being his sister? After God had threatened Abimelech in a dream not to touch Sarah, Abimelech asked Him "Lord, will you kill an innocent people? Did he not say to me 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this" (20:4-5). Of course Abraham had to explain that he did so for fear of his own life.

Gen 20:12 Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife. 13 And when God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, "This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, He is my brother." 14 Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male servants and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and returned Sarah his wife to him. 15 And Abimelech said, "Behold, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you." 16 To Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother (Abraham) a thousand pieces of silver. It is a sign of your innocence in the eyes of all who are with you, and before everyone you are vindicated." 17 Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children. 18 For the LORD had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

At that time Abraham became even more wealthy off of Abimelech who was found innocent after having taken Sarah as a wife yet had not defiled her. But that was not to say that he wasn't wealthy before going into Egypt or Gerar when he left "Ur of the Chaldees" (11:31) for the land of Canaan. He, along with his nephew Lot and all his possessions, left for a land they didn't know.

Gen 13:5 And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, 6 so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together, 7 and there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land.

Gen 13:8 Then Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. 9 Is 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."

Gen 13:11 So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other. 12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom.

Lot may have felt he was smart to choose "the Jordan Valley [which] was watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord" (v. 10). Having known famine and parched land, he chose the land that he felt would have sustained itself, but had not figured in where... 13 "... the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD." Which Lot would soon learn.

Gen 13:18 So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre (*mam-ray*), which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

But he was still without an heir.

Gen 15:2 But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "Behold, You have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." 4 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." 5 And He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then He said to him, "So shall your offspring be." 6 And he believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness. (Rom 4:3)

What was Abram to do? He felt Sarai could not bear him children even though God had promised him an heir of his own blood. So, even though not permitted by God, Abram took on the responsibility of having an heir through an unsanctified marriage to a servant Sarai obtained while in Egypt thus making him a polygamist. But...

*"... marriage was designed to be a strictly **monogamous** arrangement. Early on, however, rebellious man decided it could be otherwise." "While polygamy was 'suffered' (tolerated) during the dispensations of the Old Testament era, it was never the divine ideal, and history reveals that numerous heartaches accompanied this innovation (cf. Gen. 21 :9ff [Hagar]; 30:1-24 [Jacob]; 2 Sam. 5:13 [David]; 1 Kgs. 11:1-3 [Solomon]). Jesus indicated that such laxness would not be allowed under the Christian regime; He called men back to God's original plan (Mt. 19:8)."*

Marriage: As Designed by God by Wayne Jackson of The Christian Courier

Gen 16:1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. 2 And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. 3 So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife.

Why does man constantly have the idea that he can fix things in his own ways that go against the will of God? Ultimately, every sinful scheme man "invents" ends up coming back to bite him. Such was the case with Abram's son Ishmael, whom Hagar would bear to him, the father of a people (*the Arab nation*) through whom the false religion of Islam was born.

Ecc 7:29 See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

Strife was born between Sarai and Hagar when she saw that Hagar was with child to Abram and Sarai "dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her" (16: 6) . But...

Gen 16:7 The Angel of the LORD (*the pre-incarnate Christ*) found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And He said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." 9 The Angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." 10 The Angel of the LORD also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." 11 And the Angel of the LORD said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has listened to your affliction. 12 He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand

against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen."

Gen 16:15 And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

Abram believed that God would give him an heir but didn't believe that heir would come through Sarai.

Gen 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless, 2 that I may make My covenant between Me and you, and may multiply you greatly." 3 Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, 4 "Behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram (*Heb.87- high father*), but your name shall be Abraham (*Heb.85- father of a multitude*), for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.

God then gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision which he was to institute immediately on all males since, according to the Lord...

Gen 17:14 Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

Ishmael was fathered when Abram was yet uncircumcised but Isaac was fathered after Abraham was circumcised at the age of "ninety-nine years old" (v. 24).

Gal 4:23 But he *who was* of the bondwoman (*Ishmael*) was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman (*Isaac*) was by promise.

Gen 17:15 And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai (*Heb.8297- dominative*), but Sarah (*Heb.8283- female noble*) shall be her name. (*1 Pet 3:6 "as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord"*) 16 I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" (*What do we think Noah would have looked like at 100 since he lived to be 950?*)

Gen 18:1 And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. 2 He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth 3 and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.

After showing his hospitality toward his visitors (*One of which was the pre-incarnate Christ*) they asked him where Sarah was and...

Gen 18:10 The LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. 12 So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old,

shall I have pleasure?" 13 The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son."

It was then that Abraham, Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael, along with all their possessions, "journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar" (20:1). Nearing ninety years old Sarah was still very beautiful, for them to continue to say she was Abraham's sister to Abimelech as we have noted earlier. But Sarah, yet barren, was about to be redeemed of the promise God had made to her a year earlier.

**Gen 21:1** The LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did to Sarah as He had promised. 2 And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. 3 Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. 4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.

**Heb 11:11** By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered Him faithful Who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

The moral of this entire lesson has to do with faith. The offspring of Noah didn't trust enough in God, so they built the tower of Babel and had to be dispersed being unable to finish it due to their lack of faith. Abraham showed his faith when he left his homeland to travel into the land of Canaan. And Sarah showed her faith in finally believing she would give Abraham an heir. But is faith all that's necessary for us today?

**Jas 2:19** You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe--and shudder! 20 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"--and he was called a friend of God.

By this we can see that faith alone will not save anyone. Once we've heard the message of the gospel, yes we need to have faith to believe it (*Eph 1:13*), but it goes further. That faith needs to be backed up with a response. That response includes repentance (*Lk 15:7*) and confession that we believe Jesus truly is the Son of God (*Mat 10:32-33*). But there's more to it than that, we need to know that the only way to be saved is to come in contact with Christ's blood through being immersed in water "in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (*Act 2:38*). And "speaking the truth in love" (*Eph 4:15*) if you haven't done that you are not saved and cannot yet "enter into the joy of your Master" (*Mat 25:21*)!

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