



The Sermon

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Genesis 11:10-32

"The Theology of Genealogy"

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TRANSCRIPT

And so we come today in our study of the Word of God to Genesis chapter 11. So I want to invite you to take your Bible and turn with me to Genesis chapter 11, and today we're going to be looking at verses 10 through 32; and so we have a large section, twenty-three verses that we will be looking at today, and it contains another genealogy. And the title of this message is "The Theology of the Genealogy. The Theology of the Genealogy." And there's much theology for us to learn in this genealogy. So I want to begin, as we always do, by reading the passage; and God will be speaking even through the reading of the passage. Then I'll pray, and then we'll work our way through this a verse at a time.

So this is God's inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word. Beginning in verse 10, "These are the records of the generations of Shem. Shem was one hundred years old, and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood; and Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and he had other sons and daughters.

"And Arpachshad lived thirty-five years, and became the father of Shelah; and Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Shelah, and he had other sons and daughters.

"Shelah lived thirty years, and became the father of Eber; and Shelah lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Eber, and he had other sons and daughters.

"Eber lived thirty-four years, and became the father of Peleg; and Eber lived four hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Peleg, and he had other sons and daughters.

"Peleg lived thirty years, and became the father of Reu; and Peleg lived two hundred and nine years after he became the father of Reu, and he had other sons and daughters.

"Reu lived thirty-two years, and became the father of Serug; and Reu lived two hundred and seven years after he became the father of Serug, and he had other sons and daughters.

"Serug lived thirty years, and became the father of Nahor; and Serug lived two hundred years after he became the father of Nahor, and he had other sons and daughters.

"Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and became the father of Terah; and Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years after he became the father of Terah, and he had other sons and daughters.

"Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.

"Now these are the records of the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot. Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. 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."

Sounds like a homeschool convention. Sorry. All right, I have three sons: Andrew, James, and John, okay. And I have a daughter: Peter, all right. We started in the New Testament, they're a little bit more British-sounding.

Verse 30, "Sarai was barren; she had no children.

"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. The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran." It is finished. Let us go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, this is Your Word, and You are speaking loud and clear to us about many things from this genealogy. I do ask that You would give us ears to hear, eyes to see. Give me a tongue to speak with which to make this clear. So we look to You with eager anticipation, that You would instruct us now from Your Word. And more than instruct us, work it into our very soul. May there be much help that we will receive today from Your Word. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

Again, the title of this is "The Theology of the Genealogy." In these verses we read the flow of history from Shem to Abram. It's a very important link in the unfolding story of redemptive history; and in reality, this is the succession of the messianic line of the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. That's the big picture. There was a definite and precise path that God had marked out from before the foundation of the world for the entrance of the Messiah to come onto the stage of human history.

And so what I have just read is important, because this is the super highway by which the Messiah would enter into this world. This is the charted

course. He did not come randomly or haphazardly or unexpected or unannounced, but this path was marked out long ago. This was written over 1,400 years before the coming of Christ, as it looked back even further to this genealogy. This is a royal lineage, if you will, by which the King of heaven would descend from glory and enter into this world. It's a very specific lineage that was foreordained, that Jesus would be born of the seed of the woman, Genesis 3; the seed of Abraham, Genesis 17; the seed of Isaac, Genesis 21; the seed of David, Psalm 132; the offspring of a virgin, Isaiah 7, in Bethlehem, Micah 5.

This was all marked out by God from long ago. And this is why the New Testament begins with Matthew 1, verse 1: "The genealogy of Jesus, the son of Abraham." And it is repeated in Luke chapter 3. And so this genealogy is not just to show an unfolding of history, it's far more important. There's much more of a weightiness about this genealogy. It would literally be the bloodline through which Jesus would enter into this world. So this section, from verse 10 to verse 32, really takes us from the ark to Abram. It takes us from the flood to close to Canaan.

And so, what is the theology of this genealogy? Well, it's several things; and I just want to lay this out at the beginning before we go through this phone directory. I just want to lay this out to kind of bait the hook a little bit so that you would see the importance and the relevance of this. And it really begins with asserting that God is sovereign over history, that God appoints the time of each person's entrance into the world, that God appoints the parents of each person in this world, that God appoints the offspring that will come from each person, that God appoints the time in history when they will appear, and God appoints the time of their departure from this world. God appoints the destiny after this world of every person.

So this is not random. This is not just like an omelet of names that have been shuffled together. There is a specific point from Shem to the next, to the next, to the next, to the next, to the next; and each is a link in a chain, and God has put each link precisely, exactly in their successive order, and when they will begin, and when they will consummate their life. It's all according to the sovereignty of God, because this chain will be extended

down through the centuries of the rest of the Old Testament; and Matthew 1 and Luke 3 will chronicle that for us, and it will ultimately lead to the entrance of Jesus Christ into this world. That's who's at the end of this link. So this is, in essence, the family tree of which Jesus will be the ultimate fruit that will come from this tree.

And so, not only has God appointed each one of these, but let me just tell you this. God has appointed the time of your entrance into this world, and God has already appointed the day of your departure. And when God did so, He appointed who your parents would be. And for many of you, or some of you, those were unbelievers. That was by divine design. Abram grew up in an idolatrous family of godless Pagans. And not only has God appointed your parents, God has already appointed your offspring and what will be the fruit from the womb that will come from you.

Nothing is random in life. God is micromanaging the universe. God is in the details. And for some of you, this is a very important lesson for you to hear me say, because some of you may have been influenced by secular counselors, and really godless counselors who may have posed as Christian counselors, to tell you about your parents and your problems, and how you are suffering from this, et cetera, et cetera, and there may have been a negative influence there.

But you need to understand something. It was by God's sovereign design that He had you born into the family that you were born into. And if you're a believer that has come out of a difficult situation, you need to understand, you are a trophy of God's grace, you are a brand that has been plucked from the fire, and you need to get your eyes off of the fire and you need to get your eyes onto God and stop bemoaning the influences that were brought upon you. You need to rejoice in the grace of God that has rescued you and delivered you, and you need to be in prayer that the offspring that will come from you will go down a different path than that from which you were brought up in.

So this genealogy tells us much about God, and it tells us much about birth and life and death, and it tells us much about your life as well. And more than that, this theology also speaks to us of the humanity of Christ, that He is the offspring of a virgin's womb, He is the offspring of this lineage, that He didn't just drop out of heaven as God and go to the cross; He could have never died. He had to become a man in order to die. God never dies, only a man can die. That is why Jesus had to become truly man while being truly God, in order to die upon the cross, in order to be raised from the dead in a human body, in order to have a resurrection body and a sin, back to the right hand of God the Father.

So this is really laying the foundation for Galatians 4, verse 4, that, "Jesus was born of a woman, under the Law," as fully human as you are human, yet without sin. He stepped into our sandals, He got into our skin, He entered the human race. He was surrounded with all the temptations that you and I will ever be tempted with in their basic categories. He has suffered. He has wept. He has been thirsty. He has been tired. He knows exactly what you go through, exactly. Experientially He knows, not just cognitively as the omniscient Son of the living God, but He knows exactly. He has felt rejection. He has felt loneliness. He has felt being betrayed. He has felt everything that you and I have faced, yet even greater. Think of His temptation in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. All of the artillery of hell was unleashed upon Him; and He stood strong, mighty in His sinless humanity.

No, we have a Savior who is a part of this human lineage, who became one of us. He came to earth, that we might go to heaven. He was born of a virgin, that we might be born again. That is a part of the theology of this genealogy. And I'll tell you one more thing about the theology of genealogy still by way of introduction. It demands the virgin birth, because this is a long line of wretched sinners; and like produces like. Jesus had to be sired by the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1:35, "The Holy Spirit will overshadow you, and there will be a holy Offspring that will come to you," was announced to Mary. And so Jesus had an earthly mother, but a heavenly Father. He was truly man, born of Mary,

but truly God, the Son of God from on high. And so this demands the virgin birth. He had to become like us, yet unlike us. And if He was a sinner, He would have died for His own sins. He would have been judged for His own sins. He would have been damned for His own sins. But He had to be without sin. He had to be the spotless Lamb of God in order to take away sin.

So there's much theology just even in this genealogy for us to understand. But specific, as we look at this, is really the precision of providence, the precision of providence, how every generation was placed there perfectly by God. Now understand this: as Moses wrote this, Moses wrote this slightly more than 1,400 years before the coming of Christ, 1,400 years before the coming of Christ. So as Moses wrote this, he was looking back as he wrote this down. But there was another Author, capital A, and that was God the Father. And God recorded this in His eternal decree from before the foundation of the world. Moses wrote this looking back. In reality, God is the Author, and God wrote this looking forward from eternity past into time. So let's walk through this phone directory and let's see what's here, because I want to take this verse by verse. I don't want to just give you this big macro picture, I want us to look at this in the micro as well.

So I have a two-point message today. I almost feel like I need to apologize for that, but that's the way this breaks out. In fact, I'll just draw this to your attention right now. Do you see in verse 10 it says, "There are the records of the generations of"? And then look at verse 27: "Now these are the records of the generations of." You see that twice in this chapter? That little phrase appears twelve times in the book of Genesis. This is the sixth time that little phrase appears, and it's like a marker, it just marks divisions in the book of Genesis. It started in chapter 2, verse 4; then chapter 5:1; chapter 6, verse 9; chapter 10, verse 1, and then verse 32. Now it's the sixth time, chapter 11, verse 10; and there'll be six more of these. And many Bible commentators, when they outline the book of Genesis, they outline it by these markers. So I want to be true to the text with you. So there's only these two markers in this text, so this will be our two-point outline.

So the first thing I want you to see is, starting in verse 10, extending to verse 26, from Shem to Terah, from Shem to Terah. So we read in verse 10, "These are the records of the generations of Shem." Now you recall Shem is one of the three sons of Noah, and Shem is always mentioned first of the three sons, but he was not born first. He's always mentioned first because he's far more important; and the reason he's far more important is not anything that's in Shem, it would be because of what God would do in and through Shem. He would be the lineage for the royal entrance of Christ into this world.

The Jewish nation would come out of the loins of Shem. If you will – and in fact, verse 16 – just to look ahead. "Eber," that is where we derive the word "Hebrew." And so this is the Hebrew lineage. And God marked out for Christ not only the time of His entrance into this world, but also even the nationality of His entrance into this world. He didn't come as a Frenchman. He didn't come as a Babylonian. He didn't come as an Egyptian. It was God's sovereign design according to His infinite genius that God would send His Son to be a Jew, to be born of the Hebrew people. And so Shem is the Hebrew lineage, and it is the lineage of Christ.

Now we read in verse 10, "Shem was one hundred years old, and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood." So this starts immediately after the flood. And once they walk off of the ark, Shem and his wife begin procreating and begin populating, and two years after the flood they have Arpachshad.

"And Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and he had other sons and daughters," verse 11. Now one thing you need to note is that the lifespan will begin to decrease after the flood, and even in this text – and I'll try to draw it to your attention – it just keeps shrinking and shrinking and shrinking and shrinking, until we get to the end of chapter 11. The lifespan is in a declining mode.

And verse 12, "Arpachshad lived thirty-five years, and he became the father of Shelah." Now one thing you need to note there is that Arpachshad is



having children early; and that's a part also of the race, the human race, living a shorter lifespan; they begin to have children earlier. And the reason for that, we're not entirely certain; probably has something to do with the changing atmosphere after the flood having an effect upon the length of time that a person would live.

And verse 13, "And Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Shelah, and he had other sons and daughters." So the lifespan now has dropped from six hundred years to four hundred and thirty-eight years, and so there is a drop of almost a one hundred and sixty-two years. And they also are populating. Another thing you need to know is, as we add up these years, they are overlapping. So you can't just go in this and just add up all the numbers, because after someone has a child, he continues to live many more years. And then his son has children, and he continues to live many more years. So there's a compressing of even the overlapping of their time here.

Verse 14, "Shelah lived thirty years, and became the father of Eber." And as I mentioned earlier, that's from which we derive the term "Hebrew." Verse 15, "And Shelah lived four hundred and three years," - so he lived a total of four hundred and thirty-three years, which is down from four hundred and thirty-eight years, which is down from six hundred years - "and he, Shelah, had other sons and daughters."

Verse 16, "Eber lived thirty-four years, thirty-four years, and became the father of Peleg." And verse 17, "And Eber lived four hundred and thirteen years after." So he lived four hundred and forty-seven years, which is a few more years older. "He" - Eber - "became the father of Peleg; and he" - Eber - "had other sons and daughters." So there's an exponential growing here.

Verse 18, "Peleg lived thirty years, and became the father of Reu." Verse 19, "And Peleg lived two hundred and nine years," - okay, this really shortens after he became the father of Reu. So he lived a total of only two hundred and thirty nine years. That's down from four hundred and forty-

seven years, that's like cutting it almost in half – "and he had other sons and daughters."

Verse 20, "Reu lived thirty-two years, and he became the father of Serug; and Reu live two hundred and four years after," – that's a total of two hundred and thirty-nine years. So again the length of time is shortening – "and he became the father of Serug, and he had other sons and daughters."

"Serug lived thirty years, and he became the father of Nahor." Now Nahor would be Abram's grandfather. And everything is really funneling down to Abram; and we're going to look next week at the Abrahamic covenant. But everything in God's design at this point is to get us to Abram, because it is at Abram that God will divinely intervene and begin a global enterprise of reaching the world for Christ. "So he became the father of Nahor; and Serug lived two hundred years after," – so that means he lived a total of two hundred and thirty years. Again, it's just continuing to recede – "and he became the father of Nahor, and he had other sons and daughters."

And I just want to underscore again, each one of these generations is sovereignly, wisely, intentionally placed where they are by sovereign God in heaven. Nothing random here. Nothing just accidental or just happening; but the invisible hand of God is behind the scenes putting everything in place. And here's what we need to know. Not only is God the author and the architect of this plan, but God is also the administrator of this plan. And what He purposed in eternity past, He brings to reality within time. And everything that God purposed in eternity past comes to pass within time.

And so again, just think about your own personal life. Think about the fact that you're alive today, this very moment; that you could have been born on the other side of the globe, you could have been born before the cross, you could have been born in the middle of the Dark Ages. You could have a different skin color; you could have a different eye color; you could be speaking a different language today. But in God's sovereign design, God's perfect wisdom, He dropped you into history exactly, exactly where He wanted you, with exactly who your parents would be, with exactly who your

offspring would be and who their offspring would be. It's all a part of the plan.

So verse 24, "Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and became the father of Terah," who is the father of Abram. Verse 25, "Then Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years after he became the father of Terah," – so he lived to be only one hundred and forty-eight years old. So again, this is compressing. This is in decline the number of years of a lifespan – "and he had other sons and daughters."

Now verse 26, "Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran." Now Abram's mentioned first, but he's not the firstborn child. The firstborn would have been presumably Nahor; he would have been named after his grandfather who was mentioned earlier. But Abram now, the spotlight will be on Abram. It will be Abram through whom God will do His redemptive work. And Jesus will be the Son of Abram, the greater Son of Abram, just like He will be the greater Son of David. And so he was born sixty years later when Terah was one hundred and thirty years old.

Now Terah was not a believer, he was an idolater, he was a Pagan of the worst sort, and so all three of these sons were raised in idolatrous paganism. They weren't even in a neutral place, they were in a godless place. And they were worshipers of the moon. They were into astrology, no doubt, the influence from the Tower of Babel. And one thing about the disbursement of the people from the Tower of Babel in the first nine verses of this chapter is that it scattered their sin, and it scattered their wickedness and their godlessness and their idolatry.

And so it comes to this family, and they are – in fact, Terah is named after this moon god. His parents named him after the moon god. It would be like you naming your child Satan. Don't do that. But that's power of suggestion; maybe I shouldn't have said that. But it will be from this godless, idolatrous Pagan family that God will call Abram to be a believer. You see, God never has to have the circumstances just right to work. It just seems that God

delights to work in the most impossible situations, because it brings greater glory to Himself, so that it becomes obvious that this was from God.

And many of you here today will be able to relate to this, that you grew up in a godless home, and especially those of you who are in your 20s and 30s here, because we're living in a post-Christian culture. And those of you in your 20s and 30s, it wasn't the society or the culture that I grew up in. And so you ought to draw great encouragement from this, that Abram, he was a diamond that was plucked out of the darkest part of the coalmine. He was one that God reached all the way to the bottom of the barrel to lay hands on Abram out of this vile home situation. And yet Abram was the one that God desired.

So you should be encouraged. If you have parents that are not Christians, I know your heart breaks for that, and it, no doubt, has created great conflict. Jesus did say, "I've come not to bring peace, but a sword; to set a father against a son, and a mother against their daughter." There will be this conflict. There's always conflict wherever the gospel goes forward. But it also establishes peace. It establishes peace with God; that's where it really matters. And it establishes peace with other brothers and sisters in Christ.

So if we're describing your background - and you may be looking around and thinking, "Wow, everybody here today has come from a Christian family, and it's just me that came from a different kind of background," number one, I want you to know, you're in very good company: you're with Abram, and you're with Sarai. And also you need to understand that, number one, there's no perfect families; and number two, there are a lot of unbelieving families represented here today by way of background. And it's just the sovereign call of God that has laid hold of you and brought you to this place. You should not be discouraged, you should be encouraged as you consider your life.

Well, this leads us now to the second main heading, verse 27, "From Terah to Abram," and that will take us to the end of the chapter. And we read this. Those were nine generations that we just looked at, now comes the tenth.

"Now these are the generations of Terah." So that's like almost saying, "Truly, truly, I say unto you." That's like saying, "This is an important statement."

"These are the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran." And again, Abram is mentioned first because he is the key figure here. "And Haran became the father of Lot." That would be the nephew, become the nephew of Abram.

Verse 28, "Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans." One thing that's interesting as we've gone through, starting at verse 10, this is the first time we see the word "died." And in verses 10 to this point, all it says is "lived." The last time we looked at a genealogy in chapter 5 it always ended, "and he died, and he died, and he died, and he died," and it really was an anticipation of the flood and the judgment of God, and the whole world being submerged and really drowned and then cast down into hell.

But now on this side of the flood and the ark and the rainbow and the promise of God's faithfulness, it's the dawning of a new day. It's like the dawning of hope. It's like the dawning of a day of grace. And so rather than each of these generations ending, "and they died, and they died, and they died," it all says, "he lived, he lived, he lived, he lived."

Now there's something in that that Moses wants us to see, that there is new life now that is emerging on the other side of the flood. And so verse 28, "Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans." So now we're introduced to the city of Ur in the land of the Chaldeans.

Now Ur is a literal town that's located in the northwest corner, the northwest corner of the Persian Sea slightly north of that gulf, It's in Southern Mesopotamia, the Southern Mesopotamian Valley, and it was a very important cultural center. So it wasn't just like a few tents out in the

middle of a desert and nothing really going on there, this was a major cultural city. And when you have a major city, there becomes the pooling of iniquity and wickedness in major cities that begins to multiply. And so the city of Ur really became a city of idolatry. It became what we would call a very pagan city, full of religious superstitions that have no basis in reality; and really the linchpin of all of this idolatry was astrology and the worshiping of the planets, and believing that once destiny is controlled by the movement of the planets, which is utter idolatry.

But at the head of this is the worship of the moon god, who is considered to be the queen of heaven. And I think there will be overtones of that in the Catholic Church, calling Mary the queen of heaven, the moon god; and you must worship Mary if you want to get to Jesus, and you must venerate Mary. And she also was sinless, and she was born of an immaculate conception is really the blasphemy of the Roman Catholic Church. And so it may all have its roots here in Ur of Chaldees.

And so we read in verse 29, "Abram and Nahor" – the two brothers – took wives for themselves." And there's something to learn here about the male initiative to pursue the woman, the male initiative to take wives. It's not the wives who take a husband, it's the husbands who take a wife. I'm getting a few smiles from different parts of the congregation right now. I could just launch off in a – but I won't, because I'm filled with the Spirit. So, self-control. Yeah, be nice, be nice.

"The name of Abram's wife was Sarai." Now Sarai means "princess." It means "my princess," restricted to one person. Her name will be changed to "Sarah," which will simply mean "princess," without the "my," meaning "she is a princess for the nations" in the sense that she will be the companion of Abram, and Abram will be the father of the nations. But Sarai is her name; comes from Sarat, which is a different Arcadian language, and it really refers to the moon goddess. So she's named for the moon goddess; that's how deep she is in pagan idolatry and false religion. Her parents named her for this goddess queen of heaven, and she was a part of this astrological cult of moon worshiping.

"And the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah," which also means queen. And so there is just so much in this one family of cross-breeding, of false religion, that it couldn't be any darker. They're running away from the one true living God as fast as they could be running. They're not searching for God, they're trying to get away from the true knowledge of God, as every false religion is. It's not that they are just so sincerely religious. No, it is that they are worshiping themselves, and they are worshiping false gods is what that means. Just read Romans 1 when you get home, it will be very clear to you. "And Nahor" - at the end of verse 29 - "becomes the father of Milcah and Iscah."

Now verse 30: "Sarai was barren and she had no children." Now that's a very important verse, because this is a key factor that lies behind the faith of Abraham, that God will say to Abraham - and we'll look at it next week - "you'll be the father of many nations." And when Abram hears this, he looks at Sarai, and she's barren, she's old, and his conclusion is, humanly speaking, it's just not going to happen. And so he is put in a place to believe either what God says, despite the outward appearances, or believe what the outward appearances would dictate. But this is very important, that she was barren, and she had no children.

And by the way, today there are vast numbers of young women who feel the total opposite, because here, to be barren and no children was perceived to be a curse from God. Well, today it's almost considered to be a blessing from God to have to not take care of children, the children would be a curse. And today young women don't have babies, they have dogs, and take care of dogs, and feed dogs, and groom dogs; and rather than change diapers, they take their dog outside, and it is really an inversion of God's design. You can have a dog. I mean, we had a dog for our daughter, a couple of dogs, growing up. And I love dogs, so don't misunderstand. Don't send me emails about dogs. Let me just head that off right now. And my daughter has a third dog, and I love that third dog very much, and the dog knows who loves her, and it's me. But I love my daughter even more than that dog. And you give me a choice between a dog or a daughter, I'm taking a daughter every time.

And also today we have women, rather than having babies, they have abortions, because it didn't fit their strategic plan. Well, obviously that's murder in the first degree – intentional, premeditated murder. But here for Sarai, it was a curse, that she perceived to be a curse. Even as a godless woman she understood her purpose in life, her calling in life, to bear children.

Verse 31, "Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran," – remember Haran has died – "his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together." So they left Ur of Chaldees. They went out together from Ur of Chaldees in order to enter the land of Canaan. And so the question – there's a couple questions here – Number One: "Why did they leave?" So I want you to turn to Acts 7. And you guys putting up verses on the screen, you can put this up: Acts 7. And you need to see this, you really do. So you'll want to go ahead and turn to it. It is Stephen before the high priest of the Sanhedrin. It is his great speech for which he is stoned to death. And in Acts chapter 7, "The high priest" – verse 1, Stephen is called to account before the high priest. And all of Acts 7 is the greatest walk through the Bible you'll ever see. It's a survey of redemptive history from Abraham to the cross.

And so, verse 1, "The high priest said, 'Are these saying so?' And he" – referring to Stephen – "said, 'Hear me, brethren and fathers!'" Now they're not brethren in the sense that they've been born again, they are brethren in the sense of national identity, they are fellow Jews with Stephen. And "fathers" representing "they are like elders presiding over the affairs of Israel."

Now notice the next five words: "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia," – that means when he was in the Ur of Chaldees – "before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'Leave your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.'" Verse 4, "Then he left the land of the Chaldees and settled in Haran." It just says, "The God of glory appeared out of nowhere." Abram was living in a dark world of religious superstition. He was living in a dark world of paganism and godlessness and idolatry, and suddenly the God of glory



appeared to him. How? We don't know; we don't need to know. If we needed to know, He would have told us. But God appeared immediately, directly to Abram in the midst of his wickedness, and said, "You must leave this place. You must get out of this moon-worshipping. And I want you to go to Canaan, to a land that I will show you."

This is how God works. This is how God worked in your life. You were in spiritual darkness. Even if you grew up in VBS, even if you grew up in Awana, even if you grew up in a church, you had head knowledge, you had zero heart knowledge, and you were living in a false world of darkness, spiritual darkness, and the god of this age, the prince of this world had veiled your eyes. You lived constantly in darkness, until that day, until that time, when God, the God of glory appeared to you. And it may have been in church under the preaching of the Word of God. It may have been by yourself as you're reading your Bible. It may have been in a Bible study with other people around you. It may have been someone witness to you. Whatever the circumstances were, the God of glory appeared to you. And if the God of glory has not appeared to you, you are yet in darkness, because God is the initiator.

"There is none who seeks after God; no, not one," Romans 3. It is God who is the pursuer, and it is God who manifested His gospel of grace to you and showed you His Son, and showed you the only way of salvation; and He passed over others to get to you. He may have gone down the hall and passed your brother, passed your sister, passed your parents' bedroom, and He got to the end of the hall and He got to your bedroom, and the God of glory appeared to you. You may have been sitting in church, and God passed over others who had not yet come to faith; but He found you on the fourth row, the third seat, and the God of glory appeared to you as the Word of God was being brought.

And standing behind that is the doctrine of sovereign election, that God chose you before time began, and God then called you out. He called you out of the realms of darkness and brought you into the kingdom of His light, and that call literally laid hold of you, and it brought you, it even drug you to Christ, and it overcame your resistance. It overcame your idolatry of

yourself and of this world and of your possessions and your reputation and all that. God broke through and overcame it all, just like He did with Abram here.

And when Paul goes to write the book of Romans, and when he comes to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, *sola fide*, that he teaches in chapter 3:21 to the end of the chapter, 31. He then, chapter 4 of Romans, to build his case, to put the premier example in front of us of, "What does it look like to be justified by faith before God? What does it look like to be called out of darkness and called into light?"

The apostle Paul sets before us Abraham. He doesn't put Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. He doesn't put Peter, Paul, or Mary. He puts Abraham as Exhibit A. And so what God is doing in Abram's life here towers over the entire Old Testament of the supreme example of saving faith and being called out of rank, putrid unbelief.

So, the second question is God called him to go to Canaan; and we can all read with our own eyes here that he goes to Haran. So is this disobedience? What's going on here? And another question is, it's Abraham who's called, not Terah. So I don't know if this is to imply that Abraham now becomes so persuasive with his own father because the God of glory has appeared to Abraham. The God of glory did not appear to Terah; he dies in unbelief. He appears to Abram. And somehow, some way, the persuasion of Abram – and here's another thing you need to know. When was Abram saved? When was he converted? He's not converted until Genesis 15, verse 6: "Abram believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." And what we learn here, here's also a part of the theology of the genealogy is that the call of God always precedes saving faith. You were called before you believed.

And Abram is called in Ur of Chaldees, but he doesn't believe until he gets to Canaan. And so the call can take place over a progressive period of time. It could also happen in one Sunday. I know one preacher who was saved the first time he ever heard the gospel. Walked in a rank unbeliever, walked out

a believer, never even heard the gospel before then. So that call can take place in a concentrated period of time; but that's the exception, not the rule.

Generally that call takes – it's like God reeling in a fish over a period of time, a magnetic draw, that person coming to faith in Christ. But there is this defining split second moment when you believe. No one believes over a period of time. On the day of Pentecost – not the month, not the season, not the year of Pentecost – on the day of Pentecost three thousand were converted. So the call of God has laid hold of Abram and has drawn him out of Ur as a rank unbeliever, and Abram is under the invisible hand of God, who's taking him from Point A to Point B. He will be saved at Point C, but God has to get him someplace else first.

So why Haran? Says, "They went to Haran." And so the answer, in fact, verse 31, "And they went as far as Haran, and settled there." Well, if you're in Ur and you're going to Canaan, you would go straight through a barren desert, and there's a good chance you would not survive. So you need to take a northern route and then drop straight down. And a northern route actually takes you to Haran, but it's in the high country where there's lots of water. So you really follow the Euphrates River where there is sufficient water supply, which they did, until they came to Haran. And once they get to Haran, it says, "They settled there." That means they unpacked and settled down there.

Well, Haran was the second biggest city for idolatry. They felt very much at home. It was another city of moon-worshiping and astrology and godlessness, and Abram's not all the way there yet. He's being extracted from this life of sin, but he still has two feet in that world, and he will eventually be pulled out, even his two feet. But the call is bringing a process. And so, verse 31, "They went as far as Haran, and settled there." Again, it felt like they were in Ur. "They're talking our language. We can go to church and we're going to get the same message; we like that."

So while they're in Haran, notice verse 32, and we'll wrap this up: "The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran."

More than just dying in Haran, he died in sin, he died in unbelief, he died in idolatry, he died with his arms around his idols, he died in paganism, he died in darkness, godlessness. He died outside of grace and went straight to hell, and was cast down actually into hell by God into the lake of fire and brimstone that burns forever. No doubt, that had an effect on Abram, to see the man who was the leading influence in his life to worship moon gods now die not in peace, but to die confused, to die in carnality; maybe to even provoke in his mind there's no hope here.

And God will continue to call Abram and continue to reel him in, and God will speak to him, as we will see next week in chapter 12, with the Abrahamic covenant. But he will not cross the line with God until Genesis chapter 15. That's when he entered through the narrow gate. That's when he threw himself upon the mercy of God for salvation.

I don't know where you are here today. I would assume most of us are believers in Jesus Christ for you to come to a church like this to hear the Word of God preached. But whenever we gather this many people together – we have easily over 400 people, almost 450 people here today – there will be those among us who have not yet come all the way to faith in Christ. You may have taken some baby steps towards Christ. You maybe have begun to see the emptiness of the world and the bankruptcy of living for self and the lack of fulfillment that comes from that, and there may be a restlessness on the inside of you. You maybe even grew up outside the church and find yourself here today, and you're looking. Here's what you need to understand, that there's only one way to go from earth to God, and to be accepted by God into His presence with His approval, and that is to believe in the One whom God sent from heaven into this world. And He's the One that's going to be at the end of this lineage.

This is all building toward the coming of the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who was born of a virgin. He was born like you, but unlike you. He was born a man, fully a man, yet without sin; and he lived under the law. He lived in perfect obedience to the law of God in your place. And it was his perfect obedience to that law that has secured perfect righteousness that can be given to you as though you have

lived a perfect life under the law. He lived in your place. He then went to the cross and died in your place. And upon the cross, God transferred all the sins of all the people who would ever come to Him, and laid them upon Him; and Him who knew no sin, the sinless Son of God, became sin for us. He bore our sins in His body on the tree. He became our sacrifice. He became the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And there is no hope without believing in Christ.

If you do not believe in Christ, you too will die just like Terah, and you will go to hell. But if you will believe in Christ, when you die you will go to heaven. That's the truth. That is the truth of the Bible. And Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

So what must you do? You must turn away from your idolatry. You must turn away from this world. You must turn away from all of your efforts to be good or better, or to do whatever would need be in your mind to find acceptance with God. You'll never be good enough, you'll never be perfect enough; you've already blown it. You need to call upon the name of the Lord. You need to come to Christ and put your trust and put your faith in Him alone to save you. And He is mighty to save. He has already saved the chief of sinners, you're nothing for Him. He has much grace, much forgiveness, to lavish upon you, and He has taken away the sins of all who would trust in Him; and that would be true for you if you would but commit your life to Him.

You know the truth in your head, you just heard it. You need to be convicted of your need for this. And I can't do that. Only God the Holy Spirit can convict you of your sin. And if He's convicting you of your sin right now and making clear and plain to you your need for Him, then it boils down to an act to your will. You must make the decisive choice to believe in Jesus Christ. I can't do that for you; if I could, I would. But I cannot, that's incumbent upon you. And so if you've never believed in Jesus Christ, I would urge you this very moment. The gates of paradise are swung open today, and you may enter in if you will believe in His Son: Jesus Christ. May God help you to do that if you have never trusted Christ. It's

the greatest decision you'll ever make in your life. It is the greatest step of faith that anyone can ever make. Let us go to Him in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, thank You for this passage that requires our concentration and our focus. Thank You for the record, the infallible record of Your Word. And every time we open it, we're just continually amazed at how You work in this world. Lord, be at work in this room. Be at work in the hearts of everyone here today, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.