

LET'S SET THE CONTEXT

Welcome to the beginning of a fabulous journey. It is the journey of one who could, perhaps, be called *the world's most famous man*, outside of Jesus Christ Himself. Ladies and Gentlemen: *meet Abraham!*

But first, let's get a little context. Our man Abram (as he was known for most of his life) came 19 generations after Adam. If we take Noah as a pivot point, we see the work of God in a unique way. From Adam to Noah were 10 generations in which God worked with all of humanity. From Noah to Abram God worked through one family. But from Abram on, God worked through *one man*. From Abram until Paul, God is going to go "to the Jew first," working through the line of Abraham. To this line would come every spiritual blessing. It would be the line of God's direct work in the world. Only after Paul would God's work be extended beyond Abraham's family, and the covenants given to this family.

A UNIQUE PATTERN ALERTS AN ASTUTE READER

When coming to Genesis 11:27-32, an astute reader of God's Word will notice three *clues* that God is about to do a new thing.

First, the passage begins with the words, **Now these are the generations of** (v. 27). These words have already appeared six times up to this point in Genesis and will occur five more times after this point in Genesis, for a total of 12 times. They are clearly a dividing marker in the book. When studied closely, we see that they begin a new segment focusing on a main character of the book (Adam, Noah, Shem, etc.). And from this pattern we would expect that this would be the case again. But then we become perplexed when we read on and notice that *Terah is not the main character of the section* (a section which goes through Gen. 25:11). When we read the six introductory segments that follow, we find familiar names like Ishmael, Isaac, Esau, and Jacob. This causes us to wonder *why the segment does not begin with Abram rather than Terah*.

Second, in reading Genesis closely we notice an anomalous "three son pattern" when something big is about to happen. We know that Adam was the father of Cain, Abel, and Seth. In Genesis 5 we have the descendants of Seth, all listed with just the oldest son, until verse 32, where we meet Shem, Ham, and Japheth. In Genesis 10 (the next genealogy), the sons of Japheth are listed in multiples (no threes), followed by the sons of Ham, also listed in multiples (no threes). This is followed by the sons of Shem, in multiples (no threes). But in Genesis 11:10 the descendants of Shem are listed again, going farther than before. Each is listed singularly *until verse 27*, where we meet three sons of Terah: Abram, Nahor, and Haran. And in this pattern of threes, we always find a lead actor, a supporting actor, and a third that plays a unique role. This "pattern of three" is the second alert to the astute reader that something big is about to happen.

Third, we see an exaggerated emphasis of family relationships, especially in verse 31. With every word of Scripture being God-inspired, why does God inspire such repetition of detail? Could this be a key to understanding the story?

WHY DOES GOD CHOOSE ABRAM?

With all of this, we are expecting something big. But we are expecting it from Terah, not Abram! And there are many, in fact, that believe that God offered the "Abrahamic Covenant" to Terah before He offered it to Abraham. We will not go into all of the reasons for this belief but notice that it was Terah who left his home of Ur **to go to the land of Canaan** (v. 31), but it was Abram who finished the journey (see Gen. 12:5). In fact, there is a parallel between 11:31 and 12:5, except that in 12:5 *they came to the land of Canaan*.

Could it be (as many have suspected), that Terah was chosen of God because of his extra-strong family ties, but ultimately rejected by God because of other weaknesses? There is a Rabbinical tradition that says that Abram rejected the *idol making business* of his dad. This tradition is supported by Joshua 24:2, which says that Terah **served other gods**. Would it be too much speculation to accept this tradition and believe that there is a sense in which God chose Abram because Abram chose God?

In the end, that is all speculation. We really do not know much about Terah, or even about Abram until he is an old man. But fortunately, Genesis 18:17-19 tells exactly us why God chose Abram. God decides He cannot withhold the information about Sodom for one reason: **For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him** (Gen. 18:19). And what will Abram **command his children** to do? The verse tells us: **to do justice and judgment**. Do you know that Proverbs 21:3 says that, **To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice?**

FAMILY: THE VALUES TRANSFER PLACE

God's Word tells us that God revealed Himself to Abram *because Abram would teach His children to do justice and judgment*, and Proverbs 21:3 tells us that this is **more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice**. God is dealing with men and women differently today, offering a gift to all. But even with this, wouldn't you agree that *since God honored Abram because of his family values* that we who are under God's grace would also want those same values?

How can we transfer values of **justice and judgment** to our children? Here are some suggestions:

- Teach them the difference between right and wrong.
- Teach them to express the truth about what is right and wrong, even when it may make them uncomfortable or unpopular.
- Let them *see you* living righteously and exercising judgment in all the areas of your domain.

The Abrahamic role was unique. But we can do that which God honored in Abram.

