

You Have a Home and a Family

From Genesis

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Bible Text: Genesis 11:10-26
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We are going to be looking at verses 10 and following in Genesis chapter 11.

My wife and I have the privilege of having two adopted grandchildren, Zack and Isa. When Zachary came into my oldest daughter's family as an adopted infant Isa knew that there was something different because she was a foster child. She observed that foster children came into the household and then they left. But Zack was different. He was adopted. Zach stayed. Isa dearly desired to be adopted. She asked her mother frequently, "Am I going to be adopted?" And the answer was always, "We hope so." Finally the day did come that she became a part of my daughter's family. She was adopted. It was a very happy day. Isa wanted a family and a home. This was her desire, to know that she actually had a family and had a home.

Our text this morning is a genealogy. Yes, some would say, "What are you going to take out of this passage of Scripture?" Well, I think one of the lessons is simply this. That you, my friends, have a family and a home. You have a family and a home because you have been adopted into this same family through Jesus Christ. You are, through faith in Jesus Christ, members of God's family. You are children of Abraham. And this is the tremendous lesson that comes out of this text in Genesis chapter 11. This simple genealogy shows that you have roots, that you have a family, and that you have a home. You have a family and you have a home because you are Abraham's children by faith in Jesus Christ. And so I want this lesson to be in the forefront as we look at this text this morning in Genesis chapter 11 beginning with verse 10.

And as you look at the text and look at verse 10 you see immediately that family is in view, that generations are in view. In the New American Standard version it reads, "These are the records of the generations of Shem."¹ This genealogy, this family... The book of Genesis is divided into 11 pieces by this term, "generations." And as we look at the book of Genesis divided into these respective pieces by this terminology, "generations," we begin to realize that there are two primary families about which the book of Genesis is speaking. And the root of these two families goes back to Genesis chapter three and verse 15. Look back there with me if you would, Genesis chapter three

¹ Genesis 11:10.

and verse 15. “And I will put enmity Between you and the woman,”² God said to the devil. “I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”³

That word “seed,” does it refer to one or does it refer to many? I like questions like this—my wife will tell you this is the case—because the answer is yes. It does refer preeminently to one, who is Jesus Christ. But it also refers to many. There are children of God in view and there are children of the devil in view. Two families, if you will. And the generations that emerge in the book of Genesis lay out the genealogies of these two families, these two lines.

And, friends, you and I must realize that in the end you are and I am are either in one family or in the other. You are either a member of the family dubbed the children of God or you are a member of the family dubbed the children of the evil one; two families, two lines. You see, this is what our text in Genesis chapter 11 is talking about.

Turn back now to Genesis chapter 11, if you will. And you will notice in this genealogy that Shem to Abraham encompasses 10 generations. Look at it. Shem is number one. Arpachshad is number two. Shelah, verse 14, is number three. Eber is number four. Peleg is number five. Reu is number six. Serug, verse 22, is number seven. Nahor, verse 24 is number eight. Terah, verse 26 is number nine and Abram or Abraham is the 10th generation.

This is similar to the genealogy in Genesis chapter five which runs from Adam to Noah. There are 10 generations there also. And that first genealogy in Genesis chapter five runs us right up to the flood and the time of Noah. Who is Noah? Noah is the one promised to give rest. He was a prototype Savior. And if you look at Genesis chapter five and verses 28 and 29 it says:

Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son. Now he called his name Noah, saying, “This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the LORD has cursed.”⁴

Noah was the prototype Savior. But this genealogy in Genesis chapter 11 runs up to Abraham. And who was Abraham? Abraham, friends, was the prototype believer. And we all know this is the case. Paul uses Abraham as the one to whom he refers in Romans as that prototype believer.

And so part of the lesson of these genealogies is that as there are two lines and you and I are either in one line or the other. We are either children of God or children of the devil. We also need to realize, we need the Savior to whom Noah points even Jesus Christ and

² Genesis 3:15.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Genesis 5:28-29.

we need the faith in that Savior to which Abraham points. We need Jesus Christ and full faith in that Savior.

In these genealogies, as we look at them and this one in Genesis 11 from Shem to Abraham particularly, we find the degradation of humanity. And it is rather interesting that from Adam to Noah it takes 10 generations for this degradation to come to full flower. But in this second genealogy, Genesis 11, it only takes five generations for the degradation to come to full flower.

Look, if you would, at Genesis chapter 10 and verse 25. One of the members of this genealogy is mentioned there also, Eber. Genesis 10:25 says, “Two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided.”⁵ The reference here, friends, is to what took place and is recorded in Genesis chapter 11. At the beginning of the chapter, humanity was at first united. Then men and women determined to build a great tower. God came down and said, “No, you shall not do that. You are not to make a name for yourselves but to make a name for me and I will divide you.” It was during the time of Peleg and Eber that this division came. God came down and scattered the nations right in the middle of this genealogy in Genesis chapter 11.

And so as history moves forward, degradation seems to become much stronger. You realize as well as I do that we live in a day in which degradation in our culture and in our society in this world is very deep. Islam is desirous of covering the world. And do you know how they do evangelism? The instruments of their evangelism are guns and swords and bombs. Convert or die. This is their methodology. From a biblical perspective, this is very degraded. And even in this last week, isn't it true, that we had the unfortunate spectacle of another United States Senator resigning because of a sex scandal. And this is not the only sex scandal to which we can point. Surely, we do need that Savior to whom Noah points and that faith to which Abraham also points in these genealogies.

But something else emerges as we look at the genealogy in Genesis chapter 11. This genealogy itself presents a history. Notice how Moses records this history.

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. Arpachshad lived thirty-five years, and became the father of Shelah.⁶

And so the genealogy continues. You can do the math. It is not very difficult. And if you do the math in this genealogy, one of the things that you discover is lo and behold, Shem was still alive when Abraham comes on the scene. And if you go back and you do the math, in the earlier genealogy in Genesis chapter five, if you do the math there you discover that Adam is still alive when Lamech comes on the scene, the father of Noah.

⁵ Genesis 10:25.

⁶ Genesis 11:10-12.

And all of the sudden what some seem to think of as thousands or ten thousands of years are compacted and become much shorter spans of time.

Both Luther and Calvin point this out in very poignant ways. Calvin says in his commentary on Genesis that these genealogies are given to us so that we might understand the age of the world in which we live. This was Calvin's perspective. No, he wasn't a modern scientist. He wasn't an Evolutionist. He was a biblical theologian. Yes, this was Calvin's perspective. This was also Luther's perspective. He calculated in very specific terms the length of time elapsed in the genealogy.

There are those who prefer the doctrine of evolution. And I think, my friends, the reason they prefer the doctrine of evolution is that those thousands and ten thousands of years, those millions of years, those billions of years.... What do they do? They put us a great distance from the living God. They put a great distance between us and the act of creation. They put a great distance between us and Adam and Noah and Abraham. And when this occurs it is a lot more comfortable, isn't it? It is a lot more comfortable for people to be at a great distance from God because you don't have to reckon with him so much if he is very far away.

I just read an article yesterday about an examination of lava flowing from Mount Saint Helens. Some of you who will remember the eruption of Mount Saint Helens about 20 years ago. Some scientists did calculations on the lava lying on the ground at the base of Mount Saint Helens. They used the standard scientific procedure for determining the age of rocks. And do you know what they came up with? That that 20 year old lava lying on the ground at the foot of Mount Saint Helen was 2,500,000 years old. This is the figure they came up with. There is a little bit of difference between 2,500,000 and 20, just a tad difference. And when you look at these genealogies in Genesis chapter 11 you realize this history, friends, is much closer at hand than you might first reckon.

And not only is this history much closer at hand than you might first reckon, but I submit to you that this history is also very personal. Look again at Genesis chapter 11 and verse 16. That name Eber appears.

Eber. This is the name from which the word Hebrew likely comes. And in Genesis chapter 14 and verse 13 it says, "Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew."⁷ The Hebrew, the one who was descended from this man Eber. Family lineage often works this way. In an historical circumstance a name comes to the fore. The historical circumstance here is the dividing of the nations into many groups because of the division of the languages. This is the history, once again, from Genesis chapter 10 and verse 25. "Two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided,"⁸ as we just indicated. And so Abraham's lineage goes back to this fellow Eber and he is called by his name, the Hebrew.

⁷ Genesis 14:13.

⁸ Genesis 10:25.

My wife's maiden name is Orr, a good old Scottish name. We understand that it comes out of the clan in Scotland, the McGregors. It is derived from that name McGregor. There was a division in that clan. Those who divided from that clan took their name from the McGregors and simply called themselves the Orrs. There is history to names, my friends.

We see a similar thing with the name Christian. Missionaries driven out of Jerusalem because of the persecution surrounding Stephen went to the little town of Antioch. And, interestingly enough, the book of Acts tells us that they evangelized only those who were of the Jewish persuasion. They had a little prejudice, it seems. But some of those who were driven out of Jerusalem because of the persecution of Stephen also went to Cyprus and to other locations. They saw converts. Those converts from Cyprus, those second and third generation Christians, went to Antioch. They didn't have the same prejudices of the earlier disciples and so they began to preach the gospel to the Gentiles also. And so that congregation in Antioch grew as a congregation mixed with both Jews and Gentiles. Dr. Luke tells us that it was in that church, out of that situation that the disciples were first called Christians. Isn't this the name you are taking, that of Christian? Yes, indeed. Names do have meaning.

And the genealogy in Genesis chapter 11 becomes personal when we realize that names do have meaning and you and I are vitally connected to this very genealogy in Genesis chapter 11. With whose name does it end? Abraham's. Keep your finger now in Genesis chapter 11 if you will and turn in the New Testament to Galatians chapter three. Let's read just three or four verses in Galatians chapter three verse six. "Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."⁹

Yes, Abraham is the prototype believer. "Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham."¹⁰ Did you hear those words? We had better read them again. Therefore, friends:

Be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU." So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.¹¹

Now I want you to go back to the genealogy in Genesis chapter 11. Look at verse 26. Genesis 11 verse 26. "Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran."¹² There he is, Abraham. And into whose family have you now been adopted? You have been adopted into the family of Abraham by faith in Jesus Christ. If you trust in the Savior to whom Noah points, if you have the faith of Abraham, that faith

⁹ Galatians 3:6.

¹⁰ Galatians 3:6-7.

¹¹ Galatians 3:7-9.

¹² Genesis 11:26.

to which Abraham points, you, friends, have been adopted in this family. And this genealogy in Genesis chapter 11 is not some obscure genealogy that was recorded for the benefit of others. This is a genealogy that has been recorded in the Scriptures for your benefit. This is your family. This is your family tree if you are genuinely a child of the living God.

I find this very astounding because what this tells me, and I hope what it tells you, is: You have a home and you have a family. I remember when I got married. My own family was in many ways dysfunctional. My wife's family became more of a family to me. And it was a great delight that this was the case. I realized how much I needed a family and wanted a family.

And it is a great privilege for you and for me to be in worship together. Did I not hear one of the elders speak about this church assembly as a family? And is this not the case? You have a home and you have a family. And your home and your family has roots that run deep, that run very deep. They run right back here into Genesis chapter 11 because, friends, you are children of Abraham by faith in Jesus Christ.

When my little granddaughter was adopted into our daughter's family, there was an adoption party. And she loved and still loves to wear her little adoption dress because she counts that day precious, that adoption day.

Just a few weeks ago my wife and I were in Hershey, Pennsylvania to visit our daughter. We were in the car, in the van. Isa was sitting next to me in the back of the van and Zack was behind me. Isa called out to her mom, "Let's sing, mom." Our daughter Gail punched a button on the dash for the CD player. And they began to sing this little song.

Oh would have guessed,
Who could have seen,
Who would have possibly known,
All of these roads we have traveled, the places we've been
Would have finally taken us home?

So it's here's to you and three cheers to you!
Let's shout it hip, hip hooray!
For out of a world so tattered and torn,
You came to our house that wonderful morn,
And all of the sudden this family was born.
Oh, happy adoption day!¹³

I sat in the car with a lump in my throat and a tear in my eye because of happy adoption day. At the same time I think of our status before God in Jesus Christ, your status before God in Jesus Christ. And I am reminded that Jesus tells us that when one sinner repents all the angels in heaven give praise to God. And do you know what? I can almost hear them singing something like this.

¹³ *Happy Adoption Day*, Lyrics by John McCutcheon (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1996).

For out of a world so tattered and torn,
You came to our house that wonderful morn,
And all of the sudden this family was born.
Oh, happy adoption day!¹⁴

My friends, you have a home. You have a family. You have roots that are deep and good and wholesome. You have a family in God and you are children of Abraham through faith in Jesus Christ. Give glory and give thanks to him.

Let's pray together.

Father, you are better to us than we could ever deserve. You have given us a home. You have given us a family. You have made us your own through Jesus Christ. It has been through adoption into your family. Oh, happy adoption day. Thank you. Thank you for this little genealogy in Genesis chapter 11. Thank you that it leads to Abraham and from Abraham it leads to us. We praise you and thank you for our home and for our family. Hear us we pray in the good and gracious name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

¹⁴ Ibid.