

The first eleven chapters of Genesis present a broad, sweeping view of the early history of mankind revealing examples of rebellion and judgment. But a thread of hope also stretches out from the promise in Genesis 3:15 when God cursed the serpent. Hope is kept alive in individual examples and this thread of hope is represented and traced in the genealogical lists. The final list brings the reader to Abram, a special man.

Abram, who would become Abraham, was one of three sons that are mentioned of Terah. Terah was 70 when his first son was born (11:26) but at least 130 when Abram was born (*cf.* 11:32 with 12:4). Abram is listed first as the most important of these three sons. Two reasons stand out in this text why Abram was special.

***Abraham believed and obeyed God.*** See Hebrews 11:8.

1. *God called Abram to leave his home and family and he obeyed.*

Acts 7:2-4 clarifies that Abram and his family left Ur of the Chaldees because God had appeared to him and told him to leave. It might say that Terah took his family to Haran because he was family head or because God providentially caused Terah to decide to go to Haran, coinciding with the move which Abram had decided to make in obedience to God. Never-the-less it is clear that God brought Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees (*cf.* Genesis 17:7; Nehemiah 9:7).

If the traditional site for Ur of the Chaldees is correct, then Ur was a sophisticated and wealthy, walled city. It would have been a comfortable place to live, but Abram believed God and obeyed God and left. Neither should be think that Abram's family was supportive. According to Joshua 24:2 Terah and others worshiped other gods.

2. *God called Abram to head to a country that he did not know and he obeyed.*

It is possible that God's direction to Abram came in steps since he left not knowing where he was going (Hebrews 11:8). Haran, which means "road", was probably at an intersection of trade routes and a logical place to wait for God to show him the next step. Abram trusted God when heading into the unknown. He trusted God to keep His promises.

3. *God promised to make Abram a great nation and to give that new land to his offspring and Abram believed God.*

The strength of Abram's faith is seen in the barrenness of Sarai (11:30). There was no human hope of fulfillment in God's promise of a great nation or offspring to whom the land would be given (12:7). Though fertility and barrenness were culturally attributed to the gods, Abram believed God without spite, trusted Him and obeyed.

Faith and obedience stand out in these early chapters of Genesis which are otherwise filled with examples of disobedience. Of particular note is the account of Babel. The people wanted to make a name for themselves. God promised by grace to make Abram's name great.

The challenges to faith and obedience today are very similar to what Abram faced: believing when we cannot see the future, doing the uncomfortable, and forsaking what may be dear. Like Abram we need to believe God and show that by obeying.

***Through Abraham all the families of the earth will be blessed.***

Abram is the first one in Genesis 4-11 to whom God promises that he will be a blessing to others. This may reflect back to Genesis 3:15, God's promise to deal with the problem of the curse, but primarily it looks forward. There are at least two ways in which Abraham will be a blessing and in which all the families of the earth are blessed through him.

1. *Abraham has become an example of faith.*

See Galatians 3:6-9. We are called to consider Abraham as an example of faith. "Those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith." Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

2. *Abraham's seed or offspring is Jesus Christ.*

See Galatians 3:16. Ultimately it is in Jesus Christ, the offspring of Abraham humanly speaking, that the world can be blessed. *Cf.* Genesis 22:18. The answer to the curse is found finally in Jesus Christ: forgiveness of sin, freedom from the bondage of sin, payment of the price to redeem the world. God entered humanity through a Jewish virgin, took on flesh as a descendant of Abraham, and made salvation available.

But the blessing available to all through Abraham's seed will only be realized by those who follow Abraham's example of faith. The promises are given only to those who believe.

Note: The call of Abraham in these verses form the foundation for what is called the Abrahamic covenant which will be examined more closely in Genesis 15 when it is specifically called a covenant.

This passage offers lessons we can learn from the unique qualities of Abraham in this text: his faith and obedience and the blessing that was to come through him. It is in the challenges of life that the child of God demonstrates faith. The "impossible", uncomfortable, unforeseeable, and unsupported requires faith. By faith in Christ we become children of God and receive the promise of the Spirit of God. We can trust and the Spirit enables us to obey. But the first step must be to come to God through Jesus Christ by faith. Believe on Jesus Christ who was crucified for our sins and raised again to life.