

Noah to Abram

And the Building of a Name

- ¹⁰ These are the generations of Shem. When Shem was 100 years old, he fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood.
- ¹¹ And Shem lived after he fathered Arpachshad 500 years and had other sons and daughters.
- ¹² When Arpachshad had lived 35 years, he fathered Shelah.
- ¹³ And Arpachshad lived after he fathered Shelah 403 years and had other sons and daughters.
- ¹⁴ When Shelah had lived 30 years, he fathered Eber.
- ¹⁵ And Shelah lived after he fathered Eber 403 years and had other sons and daughters.
- ¹⁶ When Eber had lived 34 years, he fathered Peleg.
- ¹⁷ And Eber lived after he fathered Peleg 430 years and had other sons and daughters.
- ¹⁸ When Peleg had lived 30 years, he fathered Reu.
- ¹⁹ And Peleg lived after he fathered Reu 209 years and had other sons and daughters.
- ²⁰ When Reu had lived 32 years, he fathered Serug.
- ²¹ And Reu lived after he fathered Serug 207 years and had other sons and daughters.
- ²² When Serug had lived 30 years, he fathered Nahor.
- ²³ And Serug lived after he fathered Nahor 200 years and had other sons and daughters.
- ²⁴ When Nahor had lived 29 years, he fathered Terah.
- ²⁵ And Nahor lived after he fathered Terah 119 years and had other sons and daughters.
- ²⁶ When Terah had lived 70 years, he fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.
- ²⁷ Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran fathered Lot.
- ²⁸ Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans.

²⁹ And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah.

³⁰ Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.

³¹ 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 forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there.

³² The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

Genesis 11:10-32

Genealogies and Genesis

Genealogies or generations are among the most important things in Genesis. In fact, they are so important that they provide the basic outline for the book. As we have seen, there are ten “these are the generations of” formulas in Genesis. Our passage today begins the fifth of these ten when it says, “These are the generations of Shem” (Gen 11:10). This genealogy also happens to be the second long list of names with long ages lived, the first being Gen 5:3-32.

When I preached on the first list, I had the main point of that sermon come from a word that is found eight times in that genealogy—and he “died.” As the Apostle puts it, “Death spread to all men, because all men sinned ... death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning

was not like the transgression of Adam” (Rom 5:12, 14). In the genealogy we are looking at today, you may notice that this word appears only a single time in the formal list, when Terah, the father of Abram dies (Gen 11:32). (It does appear one time with one of the sons of Terah, one of Abram’s brothers, a man named Haran; 11:28). Therefore, the focus of this second genealogy is different from the first. The fact that everyone dies in Adam has been established. Now something else is being introduced.

Before we find out what that is, I want to look at our genealogy by comparing it to the first one. I want to do this having been exposed to a lecture that was not available when I preached through Genesis 5.¹ This lecture looks at various genealogies in the Bible and of the ancient Sumerian Kings

¹ The genealogy charts throughout this sermon are from Denis O. Lamoureux’s lectures on genealogies. (From his page) “Lamoureux is Associate Professor of Science & Religion St. Joseph’s College, University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta. Lamoureux holds three earned doctoral degrees—dentistry, theology, and biology.” The Matthew/Luke Genealogy Slide Show Lecture is here: (<http://www.ualberta.ca/~dlamoure/wlgen2/index.html>), the Sumerian King List Slide Show Lecture is here: (<http://www.ualberta.ca/~dlamoure/wlgen3/index.html>) and the Genesis 5 and 11 Slide Show Lecture is here:

(<http://www.ualberta.ca/~dlamoure/wlgen4/index.html>). **A word on Lamoureux.** He is an evangelical that takes some controversial views of evolution and Adam, views that would make many feel very uncomfortable. I do not believe that his views on these things follow from the data (or the genealogies), but if you watch this entire series, know that he has the agenda of Adam up front (and he even says so himself). That said, the lectures linked here are helpful for understanding the ancient mindset regarding genealogies. I see nothing wrong with them individually. I will try to highlight some of these points below.

and makes some very interesting observations about them. I want to share some of those here by way of getting us to our passage today.

An Ordinary Genealogy in the Bible

The first thing I want to point out is the differences between how you and I would compile a list of names vs. how ancient people like Matthew and Luke might do it. Let's say that we want to compile a list of the kings of Judah. Our resource material is 1, 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. We would undoubtedly begin reading the stories, finding out which king came first, which second, and so on, as well as probably recording the length of time that he reigned. These OT history books are good sources for discovering this information, and so our list would probably look something like this:

Reigns of the Kings of Judah

King	Length of Reign (Yrs)		
Rehoboam	17	Jotham	16
Abijam	3	Ahaz	16
Asa	41	Hezekiah	29
Jehoshaphat	25	Manasseh	55
Jehoram/Joram	8	Amon	2
Ahaziah	1	Josiah	31
Athaliah	6	Jehoiahaz	1/4
Joash/Jehoash	40	Jehoiakim	11
Amaziah	29	Jehoiachin	1/4
Uzziah/Azariah	52	Zedekiah	11

Sources: 1 Kings, 2 Kings & 2 Chronicles

When we do this, we discover that there is nothing unusual about the names or the length of the reigns. The numbers are what we would expect to find if people are reigning for literal amounts of time and dying with no purpose, humanly speaking, in mind. If you and I were going to compile a genealogy of, say, Jesus Christ, it would include those names, and as many others as we could find, without skipping any. That is how we do things. We are focused on the history of the thing, the accuracy of the count, and other measures of accuracy.

Genealogies of Matthew and Luke

Both Matthew and Luke compile genealogies of Jesus Christ. These genealogies differ from one another in some important ways.² As we will see, these differences betray a different focus than what we would probably have. **First**, there are **different totals of ancestors** for Jesus in the two genealogies. Now, Luke goes all the way back to Adam

² Some think Matthew traces Joseph's line while Luke traces Mary's line (something both Lamoureux and I deny). Others think Matthew traces Jesus' line through Joseph's father's father's line, while the other traces Joseph's mother's father's line (something I find plausible, but Lamoureux denies). Clearly, Matthew goes through David's son Solomon and contains all the kings of Israel, while the other goes through David's son Nathan, and contains none of the kings of Israel.

(actually God), and Matthew only goes to Abraham, so that accounts for some of it, but not all.

GENEALOGIES OF JESUS

Matthew 1

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Abraham ✓ | 1. Solomon | 1. Shealtiel ✓ |
| 2. Isaac ✓ | 2. Rehoboam | 2. Zerubbabel ✓ |
| 3. Jacob ✓ | 3. Abijah | 3. Abiud |
| 4. Judah ✓ | 4. Asa | 4. Eliakim |
| 5. Perez ✓ | 5. Jehoshaphat | 5. Azor |
| 6. Hezron ✓ | 6. Joram | 6. Zadok |
| 7. Ram ✓ | 7. Uzziah | 7. Akim |
| 8. Amminadab ✓ | 8. Jotham | 8. Eliud |
| 9. Hahshon ✓ | 9. Ahaz | 9. Eleazar |
| 10. Salmon ✓ | 10. Hezekiah | 10. Matthan |
| 11. Boaz ✓ | 11. Manasseh | 11. Jacob |
| 12. Obed ✓ | 12. Amon | 12. Joseph ✓ |
| 13. Jesse ✓ | 13. Josiah | 13. Jesus |
| 14. David ✓ | 14. Jeconiah | 14. Christ |

Luke 3

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------|------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. Jesus | 12. Esli | 23. Neri | 34. Simeon | 45. Obed ✓ | 56. Abraham ✓ | 67. Noah |
| 2. Joseph ✓ | 13. Naggi | 24. Melki | 35. Judah | 46. Boaz ✓ | 57. Terah | 68. Lamech |
| 3. Heli | 14. Maath | 25. Addi | 36. Joseph | 47. Salmon ✓ | 58. Nahor | 69. Methuselah |
| 4. Matthat | 15. Mattahias | 26. Cosam | 37. Jonam | 48. Nahshon ✓ | 59. Serug | 70. Enoch |
| 5. Levi | 16. Semein | 27. Elamadam | 38. Eliakim | 49. Amminadab ✓ | 60. Reu | 71. Jared |
| 6. Melki | 17. Josech | 28. Er | 39. Melea | 50. Ram ✓ | 61. Peleg | 72. Mahalaleel |
| 7. Jannai | 18. Joda | 29. Joshua | 40. Menna | 51. Hezron ✓ | 62. Eber | 73. Cainan |
| 8. Joseph | 19. Joanan | 30. Eliezar | 41. Mattatha | 52. Perez ✓ | 63. Shelah | 74. Enos |
| 9. Mattahias | 20. Rhesa | 31. Jorim | 42. Nathan | 53. Judah ✓ | 64. Cainan | 75. Seth |
| 10. Amos | 21. Zerubbabel ✓ | 32. Matthat | 43. David ✓ | 54. Jacob ✓ | 65. Arphaxad | 76. Adam |
| 11. Nahum | 22. Shealtiel ✓ | 33. Levi | 44. Jesse ✓ | 55. Isaac ✓ | 66. Shem | 77. God |

✓: aligns with Matt 1 genealogy

TOTAL: 77

Matthew contains **26 generations** between David and Jesus, while Luke contains **41 generations** between them. That is **15 generations difference**. To put into perspective, there are 14 generations between my daughters and their great, great grandfather, a man by the name of **William**

Brewster. William Brewster, you may have once learned, was the pastor on the **Mayflower** back in 1620. There are 435 years difference between Mr. Brewster's birth and my firstborn's birth. That comes close to the almost 450 years of difference that would have to be made up between Matthew and Luke's 15 generation difference.

It is probable that Matthew and Luke are **tracing different sides of Joseph's family tree**. In that case, I think some generational difference can be accounted for by fathers having babies at an earlier age in one line than the other. But fifteen generations over just 1000 years is a lot to have to make up that way. I think it is much more plausible that one or the other has just decided to **leave out some names**, something that would be unthinkable to us moderns. I don't mind telling you that if you could trace my daughter's lineage back a thousand years, and decided to leave out everyone from me to William Brewster, I wouldn't be a happy camper.

Yet, I'm not speculating on this. We know that Matthew left out some names in of at least the kings of Judah, for he does not mention Ahaziah, Joash, or Amaziah, while 1 Chronicles 3 in its genealogy does:

GENEALOGY OF JESUS

MATTHEW 1:1-16

1 st 14	1 Chr 1:34, 2:1-15	2 nd 14	1 Chr 3:10-16	3 rd 14	1 Chr 3:17-24
1. Abraham	✓	1. Solomon	✓	1. Shealtiel	Pedaiah
2. Isaac	✓	2. Rehoboam	✓	2. Zerubbabel	✓
3. Jacob	✓	3. Abijah	✓	3. Abiud	Hananiah
4. Judah	✓	4. Asa	✓	4. Eliakim	Shecaniah
5. Perez	✓	5. Jehoshaphat	✓	5. Azor	Neariah
6. Hezron	✓	6. Joram	✓	6. Zadok	Elioenia
7. Ram	✓		Ahaziah	7. Akim	
8. Amminadab	✓		Joash	8. Eliud	
9. Hahshon	✓		Amazriah	9. Eleazar	
10. Salmon	✓	7. Uzziah	✓	10. Matthan	
11. Boaz	✓	8. Jotham	✓	11. Jacob	
12. Obed	✓	9. Ahaz	✓	12. Joseph	
13. Jesse	✓	10. Hezekiah	✓	13. Jesus	
14. David	✓	11. Manasseh	✓	14. Christ	
		12. Amon	✓		
		13. Josiah	✓		
			Jehoiahkim		
		14. Jeconiah	✓		

4 names deleted

TOTAL: 42

Why would he do this? It is because, while certainly wanting to ground Jesus' birth in history (you can leave names out and still do that), Matthew has a **theological point** he wants to make. He says, “**Thus there were 14 generations in all from Abraham to David, 14 from David to the exile in Babylon, and 14 from the exile to Christ**” (Matt 1:17). The historical reality is that there were three more sons or generations according to **1 Chron 3:10-17**. So is Matthew lying? Does he not know how to count? No, he is doing something else. He is communicating **a message of faith through the these numbers.**

We must ask ourselves, why the number 14? Matthew is obviously manipulating the line slightly to arrive at this number. The answer has to do with something called **Gematria**. In Hebrew (and Greek for that matter), each letter is also assigned a numerical value. This is hard for us to understand, because our alphabet does not work like this. But theirs did. The word for “David” has three letters: Dalet, Vuv, and Dalet (or as I would like to say, seeing that I share it in common with him: DVD - דוד). The Dalet has a numerical value of 4. The Vuv has a value of 6. The Dalet has a value of 4. That adds up to ... **14**: Matthew’s number. The theological truth Matthew is communicating through this genealogy is simple. **Jesus is the “son of David,”** a phrase he uses more times than any other author in the Bible. Jesus’ kingship is highly important to Matthew.

GENEALOGY OF JESUS (Matt 1:1-16)

1 st 14	1 Chr 1:34, 2:1-15	2 nd 14	1 Chr 3:10-16	3 rd 14	1 Chr 3:17-24 (MT)
1. Abraham	✓	1. Solomon	✓	1. Shealtiel	Pedaiah
2. Isaac	✓	2. Rehoboam	✓	2. Zerubbabel	✓
3. Jacob	✓	3. Abijah	✓	3. Abiud	Hananiah
4. Judah	✓	4. Asa	✓	4. Eliakim	Shecaniah
5. Perez	✓	5. Jehoshaphat	✓	5. Azor	Neariah
6. Hezron	✓	6. Joram	✓	6. Zadok	Elioenia
7. Ram	✓			7. Akim	
8. Amminadab	✓		Ahaziah	8. Eliud	
9. Hahshon	✓		Joash	9. Eleazar	1 Chr 3:17-24 (LXX)
10. Salmon	✓		Amazriah	10. Matthan	11 names instead of 6
11. Boaz	✓	7. Uzziah	✓	11. Jacob	
12. Obed	✓	8. Jotham	✓	12. Joseph	
13. Jesse	✓	9. Ahaz	✓	13. Jesus	
14. David	✓	10. Hezekiah	✓	14. Christ	
		11. Manasseh	✓		
		12. Amon	✓		
		13. Josiah	✓		
				TOTAL: 42	
		14. Jeconiah	✓		
			Jehoiachim		
			4 extra names		

Matt 1:17
 14 generations in all from Abraham to David,
 14 from David to the exile to Babylon, and
 14 from the exile to the Christ.

Gematria of David
 $4 + 6 + 4 = 14$
 ד ׀ ׀ Dawid

David is 14th generation from Abraham

Stylistic Seven
 $14 = 7 \times 2$ $42 = 14 \times 3$
Jesus the Son of David Theme
 Matthew: 9 X
 Mark: 3 X
 Luke: 2 X

Luke is after something very different. If you add up the number of names in Luke's genealogy, you come up with a stylistic number: 77. 7 is the perfect number, so 77 would be perfection multiplied. It is any wonder, then, that the final father in Luke's count is not Adam, but God himself? For Luke, he is determined to teach you through his genealogy that Jesus is the "son of God."

GENEALOGY OF JESUS

LUKE 3:23-38

1. Jesus	12. Esli	23. Neri	34. Simeon	45. Obed	56. Abraham	67. Noah
2. Joseph	13. Naggi	24. Melki	35. Judah	46. Boaz	57. Terah	68. Lamech
3. Heli	14. Maath	25. Addi	36. Joseph	47. Salmon	58. Nahor	69. Methuselah
4. Matthat	15. Mattahias	26. Cosam	37. Jonam	48. Nahshon	59. Serug	70. Enoch
5. Levi	16. Semein	27. Elamadam	38. Eliakim	49. Amminadab	60. Reu	71. Jared
6. Melki	17. Josech	28. Er	39. Melea	50. Ram	61. Peleg	72. Mahalaleel
7. Jannai	18. Joda	29. Joshua	40. Menna	51. Hezron	62. Eber	73. Cainan
8. Joseph	19. Joanan	30. Eliezar	41. Mattatha	52. Perez	63. Shelah	74. Enos
9. Mattahias	20. Rhesa	31. Jorim	42. Nathan	53. Judah	64. Cainan	75. Seth
10. Amos	21. Zerubbabel	32. Matthat	43. David	54. Jacob	65. Arphaxad	76. Adam
11. Nahum	22. Shealtiel	33. Levi	44. Jesse	55. Isaac	66. Shem	77. God
						TOTAL: 77

77

The Perfect Number

The point of this is to help you understand that genealogies in the Bible often carry both symbolic numbers and counts to create a theological idea, so that they can teach you something that will help your faith. To put that another way, genealogies in the Bible are often anything but boring.

They aren't here *only* to record a line, though they *at least* do this. Often, they are begging for you to discover the overt message the writer is sending you through them, a message that any Jew would have understood almost immediately.

Sumerian Kings Lists

Another way to teach this is by looking at the [Sumerian Kings Lists](#). We did a little of this when we were in Genesis 5. Today I want to show you a little bit more. There is more than one of these lists dealing with the same period of time, and they do not match up completely. Yet, they share something very important in common. For example, consider the numbers of both the kings and the length of their reigns in the two lists below:

Sumerian King Lists **BEFORE the Flood**

King	W-B 444	W-B 62
Alulim	28,800	67,200*
Alagar	36,000	72,000
Enmenluanna	43,200	21,600
Enmengalanna	28,800	—
...kidunnu	—	72,000
...alimma	—	21,600
Dumuzi	36,000	28,800
Ensipazianna	28,800	36,000
Enmenduranna	21,000*	72,000
Ubartutu	18,600*	28,000
Ziusudra	—	36,000

In the first list there are eight kings. Each king reigns for an incredible average of **30,150 years!** In the second list, there are **ten kings** (this parallels Genesis 5's list of ten names), and they reign an even more unbelievable average of **45,560 years!** Each! But there is something else to notice about these reigns. Each king reigned for a length of time that is a **multiple of 100**. Even more curiously, almost all of these reigns are 60^2 times x . Why?

Sumerian King Lists **BEFORE the Flood**

King	W-B 444	W-B 62	'60 ² Times X' Formula	
Alulim	28,800	67,200*	$60^2 \times 8$	*
Alalgar	36,000	72,000	$60^2 \times 10$	$60^2 \times 20$
Enmenluanna	43,200	21,600	$60^2 \times 12$	$60^2 \times 6$
Enmengalanna	28,800	—	$60^2 \times 8$	—
...kidunnu	—	72,000	—	$60^2 \times 20$
...alimma	—	21,600	—	$60^2 \times 6$
Dumuzi	36,000	28,800	$60^2 \times 10$	$60^2 \times 8$
Ensipazianna	28,800	36,000	$60^2 \times 8$	$60^2 \times 10$
Enmenduranna	21,000*	72,000	*	$60^2 \times 20$
Ubartutu	18,600*	28,000	*	$60^2 \times 8$
Ziusudra	—	36,000	—	$60^2 \times 10$

60 was an important number in the ancient world. They actually had a “chicken scratch” (cuneiform writing) for 60^2 , 60, 1, $1/60$, and $1/60^2$. I believe this has to do with their ancient astronomy and the 360 day calendar they used (it is also the mystical, theurgic³ number of a circle 360°). But the point is, they are communicating something symbolic and something religious in these numbers, namely, that these were some really important kings and these numbers legitimated their reign.

The Sumerians also have kings lists [after the great Flood](#). What is curious about these lists is two-fold. First, the universal symmetry of a reign going into the numbers 60 and 100 which existed prior the Flood begins to break down. Second, the length of the reigns of these kings goes down significantly. The move from the tens of thousands of years before the flood to the high hundreds immediately after the flood, to basically the same kind of numbers we have today (a few dozen years).

³ Theurgy is the ancient mystical mindset combining geometry (circles) and astronomy/astrology (which were not really separate in their minds). For more on this, see the videos of David Flynn.

Sumerian King List

AFTER the Flood

King	Reign (Years)	'60 Times X' Formula			
Ga . . . ur	1200	60 X 20	En-men-barage-si	900	60 X 15
Nidaba	960	60 X 16	Aka	629	—
Bu.an . . .	840	60 X 14	Mes-kiag-gasher	324	—
Kalibum	960	60 X 16	En-me-kar	420	60 X 7
Qalumum	840	60 X 14	Lugalbanda	1200	60 X 20
Zuqapiq	900	60 X 15	Dumuzi	100	—
Atab	600	60 X 10	Gilgamesh	126	—
Masha	840	60 X 14	Ur-Nungal	30	—
Arwi'um	720	60 X 12	Utul-kamma	15	—
Etana	1560	60 X 15	Labah . . .	9	—
Balih	400	—	En-nun-dara-Anna	8	—
En-me-nunna	660	60 X 11	Mes . . . he	36	—
Melam-Kishi	900	60 X 15	Melam-Anna	6	—
Bar-sal-nunna	1200	60 X 20	Lugal-ki-tun	36	—
Samug	140	—	Mes-Anne-pada	80	—
Tizkar	305	—	Mes-kiag-Nanna	36	—
Ilku'	900	60 X 15	Elulu	25	—
Ilta-sadum	1200	60 X 20	Balulu	36	—

What the Sumerian Kings lists do is help us see two things. They help us see that Matthew and Luke's use of stylistic numbers is not just a Jewish thing, but that it goes back a long, long time in history and is shared by ancient cultures. Second, they show us [some correspondence](#) in the way the length of time changes between our own genealogies in Genesis 5 and Genesis 11.

Genesis 5 and 11 Genealogies

So let's return to the Bible now. I want to go back and look at the list in Genesis 5 for a moment. You will remember that before the Flood, men are given very long life spans. In fact, the average is **912 years**. Our focus here is usually on the total length of time lived. What I did not point out when we were there were the **other two numbers** associated with each man. The first is the age he is at the birth of the relevant son. The second is the period of time he lived after that birth. When we list these together, we see something fascinating and important:

GENESIS 5

Genealogy of Hebrew Patriarchs **BEFORE** the Flood

	Age at Son's Birth	Period Lived after Birth	
1. Adam	130	800	
2. Seth	105	807	
3. Enosh	90	815	
4. Kenan	70	840	
5. Mahalalel	65	830	
6. Jared	162	800	
7. Enoch	65	300	
8. Methuselah	187	782	
9. Lamech	182	595	
10. Noah	500	[450]	912

The first thing we notice is that all of the numbers relate in one way or another to [the number 5](#). Of the 20 numbers, 15 of them end in either a 5 or a 0. Now, this is not what we found when we saw the length of king years for example. Sometimes, the Bible does not care about stylistic numbers. Other times, it does. Given that there are 10 digits between 0-9, and that 5 and 0 are two of these, statistics would tell us that if this were simply numbers like we see in the lists of the reigns of the kings, that we would expect only about 20% of them to end in a 5 or a 0. Instead, we have 75% that do.

This is [statistically significant](#). That means that while it is logically possible that these are the literal ages that these men lived, and that God sovereignly moved in their lives to make it “just so happen” to be this way, it wasn’t an accident at all. I’m certainly open to that. But it is also quite possible, in fact statistically probable, especially given that ancient people didn’t care about the same kinds of things that we care about, that numbers are being rounded to make a [theological point](#). That is what I was after in showing us how Matthew, Luke, and the Sumerians have all dealt with genealogies.

Of the remaining five numbers, we notice that they [each end in a 2 or a 7](#). If you subtract 7 from any of these remaining numbers, they all become factors of five again. So now not only does five rise up again, 7, that perfect number,

raises its head. 7 is pretty easy to understand, but why 5? Some have suggested that it is because these genealogies all relate to the later Jews, and Jews are the people of the **Pentateuch—the five books of Moses**, the first five books of the Bible, the only five books that the Sadducees accepted as God’s word. Thus, five would have been significant to the Jews reading this genealogy.

Now let’s think about the **genealogy before us** today. It is found in **Genesis 11:10-26**. We will go all the way through **vs. 32** as we look at the sixth “generations of” in the book: **The generations of Terah (vv. 27-32)**, but the genealogy really ends at **vs. 26**. Most of us know that those in this list **do not live as long as those before the Flood**. Rather than an average of 912 years, these guys “only” live an average of **333 years**, and the actual **length decreases** almost every generation. Many people have speculated about why this would be, and since the Bible doesn’t tell us, I’ll just leave it at your guess is as good as mine. It is fascinating to think about, but I want us to think more about what is here than what isn’t.

GENESIS 11

Genealogy of Hebrew Patriarchs AFTER the Flood

	Age at Son's Birth	Period Lived after Birth	
1. Shem	100	500	
2. Arpachshad	35	403	
3. Shelah	30	403	
4. Eber	34	430	
5. Peleg	30	209	333
6. Reu	32	207	
7. Serug	30	200	
8. Nahor	29	119	
9. Terah	70	[135]	
10. Abram	[100]	[75]	

Curiously, this decrease in numbers parallels the Sumerian Kings Lists, though the length of time is significantly less in the Bible. Even more curious, to me anyway, is how, like the Kings Lists, the universally stylistic numbers before the Flood begin to break down now after the Flood. What do I mean?

Again, there are 20 numbers (the age when a child was born, and the length he lived after that) in the genealogy.

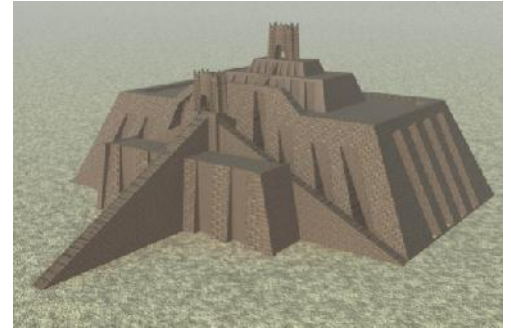
This time, 12 of the 20 are multiples of 5. That is still statistically significant. Two more of these end in 2 or 7 like before. But now, six of the numbers don't seem to have any style at all. They seem much more normal, just like the length of years that a of Judah king ruled.

I'm not entirely sure what to make of this breakdown in either the Sumerian lists or the biblical lists. Why would some numbers be stylistic and others not be? My best guess is that it is a theological point: the genealogy is reinforcing that the Golden Age before the Flood is no longer going to exist. The Flood has been a disaster, not only in how it killed so many, but also in the effects it now has upon man's age. The Flood has not eliminated sin. In fact, if anything, its effects have made sin all the more acute. For if death is the result of sin, and men are dying faster, then sin is that much more ravaging now than even before. And we must remember that before the Flood, sin was so bad that God got so angry he destroyed the entire earth because of it. This is a hint for you as to why I think the word "death" is no longer omnipresent in this genealogy as compared to Genesis 5. It isn't that man is not dying. Far from it. Rather, God is about to do something very unexpected. That unexpected thing is the heart of the Bible's message.

Before we get to that, let us take a look at our genealogy more carefully. There are **ten names here**. This parallels what we see before the Flood. They begin with **Shem**, the son of Noah, the man whose name means “**name**.” This itself is highly significant, as there is a play on “name” throughout these chapters. Shem keeps the stylistic numbers moving right along from before the Flood, as he is **100** years old when he gives birth to Arpachshad, and he lives **500** more years after that, having other sons and daughters (**Gen 11:10-11**).

Arpachshad has an interesting name. It means, “**One that releases;**” or “**a boundary of the Chaldeans.**” Chaldean was another name for Babylon. In light of the fact that the nations have just been dispersed from Babel, but that this man clearly lived before Babel, we see in his name how the people after the Flood stayed in virtually the same place. Jumping ahead, the Chaldeans are associated with a town called Ur in **Gen 11:31**. **Ur** is place Abram left to move west to the Promised Land. It is located about 200 miles southeast of Baghdad, and 150 north west of Kuwait City. Ur also happens to be the site of **the greatest reconstructed ancient ziggurat in the world**, a mountain-temple Abram would surely have seen with his own eyes.

Ziggurat of Ur



But with **Arpachshad**, we see something else. Almost immediately, the **symmetry of the numbers begins to break down**. He lives **35** years and father's Shelah (**Gen 11:12**). This is the first sign of trouble in all of the genealogies of the Bible thus far, for this is over twice as early as anyone else has ever fathered a son. Second, he lives **403** more years, having other sons and daughters (**13**). This is first time in either of these genealogies that the number five, the number of the Torah, is no longer detectable.

Shelah follows suit. In fact, almost everything about him is similar to his father. His name means “**shooting forth**” or “**sent**” (similar to one that releases or boundary). It comes from a root means a weapon; a missile; or a sprout. He lives **30** years (a multiple of five, but five less than his father), and

had Eber (**Gen 10:14**). He then lives **403** more years, just like his father (**15**).⁴

Eber is an important character, in that his name can also be Heber, and he becomes the father of the “**Hebrews**.” His name is also important for the Babel-spreading out motif, for it means “**He who passed over; the region beyond**.” In him, the symmetry is flipped around. He gives birth at **34** (no detectable symbolic significance) to Peleg (**Gen 11:16**), but then lives **430** years (a multiple of 5; **vs. 17**).

Peleg means “**division**,” and his is the name that had a play on the dividing of the nations at the Tower of Babel (where the word chosen for a word play is *palag*; **Gen 10:25**). Peleg returns to the arrangement we saw prior to Heber. He lives **30** years, like Shelah, gives birth to Rue (**11:18**), and lives **209** more years (**19**). 209 is in no way related to 5 or 7. But it is important for one reason. Suddenly, we have seen a **200 year drop** in total age of a patriarch.

Rue means an **associate, i.e. of God, friend, or friendship**. Perhaps it is for this reason that for the first time since Shem,

⁴ There is no word in Hebrew for a grandfather, or great-grand father. So he could be his father or he could be his ancestor. Given that the number 10 is highly symbolic, and parallel with the 10 prior to the Flood, ancestor could be a better choice, but who knows for sure? Some point to the fact that each man has a son, and therefore there could not be any “gaps.” This is certainly possible. But scholars have also given reasons for why this is not an open and closed argument. See Green’s article cited in the sermon on Genesis 5.

both of his numbers are related to 5 and 7. He lives 32 years ($32 - 7 = 25$... a multiple of 5 as we saw prior to the Flood) and gives birth to Serug (**Gen 11:20**). He lives 207 years ($207 - 7 = 200$... a multiple of 5) and has other children (21).

Serug means “branch” or “shoot.” I think of Branch of Shoot of Jesse here, since he is a father of Jesus Christ, and so again, perhaps it is no coincidence that he, like Rue, has two stylistic numbers attached to him. He lives 30 years and gives birth to Nahor (**Gen 11:22**). He lives another 200 years and has other sons and daughters (23).

Nahor means “snorting; breathing hard; slayer; inflamed, or heated.” He doesn’t sound like a particularly nice man (or maybe he just has asthma like I did as a child). Yet, is it just a coincidence that for the first time, there is nothing relating to 5 or 7 with either of the numbers give to him. He lives 29 years and has Terah (**11:24**). He has other children and lives 119 more years (25). This gives us another huge bump downward in age, as he cuts the length almost in half from his father. Is the sin implied in his name responsible for the lowest and least symbolic numbers yet?

Last comes **Terah**. His name means to “delay; wild goat; turning; or wandering.” A foreshadowing of Israel in the future? Terah lives 70 years (**Gen 11:26**). Notice that Terah’s life is not concluded until the last chapter of the verse. There

is an interruption here. Maybe part of that is to make you think about the number you have just read?

70 is interesting for a few reasons. He is the last in this particular genealogy. Being last (as well as the meaning of his name) seems to correspond to the Babel motif, which we saw also has 70 attached to it. Also, he suddenly jumps us back up in age of a person giving birth. In fact, this is the oldest that anyone has had a son since Shem. Finally, along with 70 let me point out here the only other thing we know about Terah outside of this chapter. **Joshua 24:2** says, “Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor; and they served other *elohim*.” Elohim is not the word for an idol, but for **the gods**, the gods of the nations. The gods that Joshua in that very speech was saying are your (their) choices of who to worship.

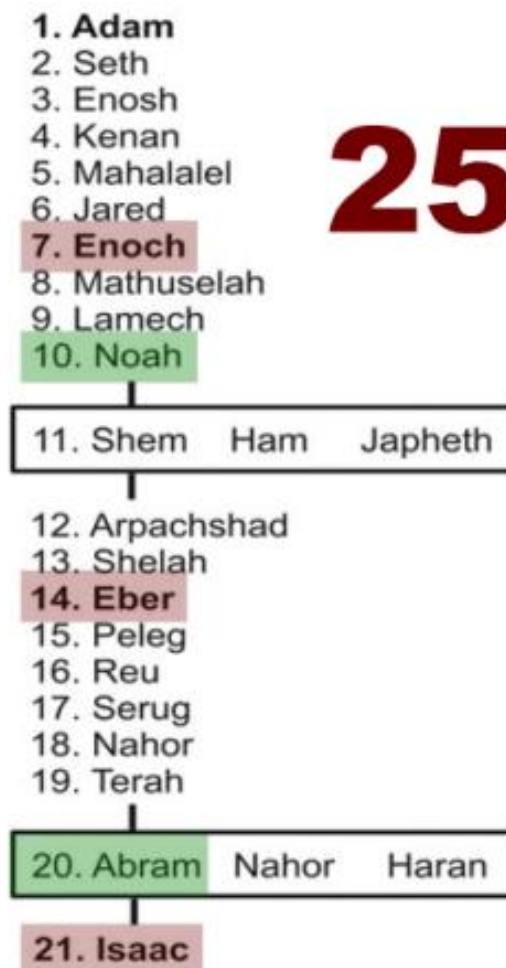
Before concluding with the rest of the passage, I want to point out one more fact about these two genealogies. I mentioned that Genesis 5 and 11 both have 10 names. What I did not say is that the 10th and 20th (both multiples of five) are the most important. The 10th name is **Noah**. The 20th is **Abram** and we will come to him in a moment. Furthermore, each of these men have three sons. Furthermore, the 7th, 14th and 21st (all multiples of seven) are the three other important names: Enoch, Eber, and Isaac. When we add up all of these

numbers, we get a total of 25 names (a multiple of five) and have a beautiful, symmetrical balance that combine to make it very easy for an oral culture like theirs to remember where they came from. Surely in even this, God is good to his people. Even math reflects the redemptive purposes of God.

GENESIS

5, 11 & 21

Genealogical Framework of the Hebrew Patriarchs



So what is the purpose of this genealogy? I just gave you another hint. If it isn't death, what could it be? Do the significant numbers 5 (Torah) and 7 and the people that are being highlighted in those significant slots help you any?

How about the idea that things are deteriorating? When you think of this question, remember who we are about to be introduced to.

Let me suggest that **the purpose of this genealogy is to show you that things are not getting better, they are getting worse.** It got to the point, the rest of Scripture teaches, that even in the line of the Messiah, men were given over to darkness and the worship of other gods. Is this not both fascinating and tragic? So with those thoughts now running through your head, let's look at the last few verses of Genesis 11.

Genesis 11:27-32 gives us the **sixth** “generations of” division of the book. **Terah** ends the previous genealogy, and begins a new one. Thus, something new is being introduced here. What is it? It tells us that Terah had three sons: **Abram, Nahor, and Haran (27)**. As I just said, this parallels Noah's three sons genealogically: **Shem, Ham, and Japheth**.

Haran means a “**mountaineer**” or “**very high**.” I like that name (which is also curious in light of “70”). But Haran dies in the presence of his father in the land of his kindred, in Ur of the Chaldeans (**Gen 11:28**), which as we saw has that large, man-made mountain. That leaves Terah with two sons. Each son takes a wife.

Abram is first mentioned. Abram means “high/exalted father.” He marries **Sarai**, which means either “contentious; quarrelsome; or princess.” Given that I watch too many princess movies because four little girls are in my house, I understand why the word means both. You will come to understand it too, as we come to learn more about this quarrelsome princess in the chapters that follow.

Nahor (named after his ancestor apparently) marries **Milcah**. The language here is sort of difficult to understand so I give you the Living Bible’s rendering, “... he name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. (Milcah and her sister Iscah were daughters of Nahor's brother Haran.)” (**Gen 11:29**). Milcah means “Queen.” Hmmm. Sarai is only the princess, but Milcah is the Queen. Do you think that might have caused any quarrelling?

Why are these people introduced with such lengthy statements compared to almost everyone else in the genealogies in Genesis up to this point? This question also points to the purpose I’m asking you to think about.

It says more about Sarai. “Now Sarai was barren; she had no child” (**Gen 11:30**). Foreshadowing. Then it says, “Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson,⁵

⁵ “Son” and “grandson” are the same word in Hebrew: *ben*. See n. 4 (above).

and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran" ([Gen 11:31-32](#)). Well take the last verse first.

[Vs. 32](#), this [concludes the generations](#) of Terah and Shem. First, like Shem who started it off, we see that Terah returns us to the use of stylistic numbers in both instances. [70](#) and [205](#) are both multiples of five (seventy also being a multiple of 7 and 10). Is this a sign that something good is about to happen? Yes, for out of false worship, Yahweh is about to do something wonderful.

Second, Terah died in Haran. Now, the city Haran seems to have the same name as Terah's son who died far away to the east. How did this happen? The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* seems to think it was coincidence. The Akkadian word *arrānu* means a "road" or "highway" and is spelled differently and means something different from the Hebrew name Haran. Perhaps, and it is pure speculation, for a time Terah, Nahor, and Abram grew very strong and even began to rule this city and saw the similarity of names as something by which they could rename it after their son, at least for a time. Who knows. The main point of says that Terah died here is that he

did not die in the land of Canaan. And why should that matter?

Let's return to **vs. 31**. Abram and his father left Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but they ended up settling in Haran. But **why did they leave Ur in the first place?** And why did they not go to Canaan if that is where they were supposed to go?

At this point, I'm not going to move into Gen 12. Instead, I want to tell you about something the Bible says happened in our story today, but that is not, technically speaking, in our story. It is found at the very beginning of Stephen's speech in **Acts 7:2-4**. Stephen says, "**Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham *when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,* and said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.'** Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into **this land in which you are now living.**"

Stephen fills in otherwise unknown (to us) information. Terah and Abram did not leave Babylon because they were bored, or got new jobs, or wanted to travel the world. Rather, the **God of glory appeared to Abram**. He showed

himself to Abram. “Appearance” is the language of sight, vision.

He also talked to Abram. The Word. He gave him a command. “Go out from your land.” Who is this God of Glory? It is none other than the LORD who appears to Abram in the very next chapter, and in many chapters afterward. It is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ in his preincarnate form. This is why Jesus said that Abraham rejoiced to see his day (John 8:56) and literally “he saw, and was glad.”

If Jesus is showing himself to a family that worships other gods, then it shows us most extraordinarily, the grace of God. And this is the purpose of our text today. Did Nahor or Terah or Abram deserve to have God come to them? Not at all. They were not even looking for him. But the LORD showed himself to Abram and Terah and he set out for Canaan. I suggest that the purpose here is the opposite of death. It is the promise of life that will come through the line of Abram.

But they got stuck in Haran. They settled down there. This is not something they were supposed to do. Then Terah died in Haran. At that point, Stephen says that God removed Abram from there. Whatever he did, it seems to have been against Abram’s initial will. God sent Abram packing for

Canaan. Again, more grace, even though it may not have made Abram happy.

Grace is why those numbers are the way they are. It is why the ages are the way they are. They show decline—decline in age, decline in obedience, decline in faith, decline in everything that is good. But out of decline, out of disobedience, out of false worship, God is going to make a Shem for himself—a Name. That name will be none other than the Lord Jesus himself.

Have you understood today that sin still wreaks havoc, even though most of what we have talked about is genealogies? Have you seen how in the midst of that destruction, man only disintegrates further and further? And have you seen that God is relentless in his pursuit of his own—his own **glory**, his own **people**, his own **name**? Have you believed upon the Name that is above every name? If not, trust in him this very day and rejoice that you have seen his Day before end of all things draws nigh. For God is good in this day of salvation. He is good to save, good to show grace, good to give eternal life. Call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Then you, like Jesus and Abram, Shem, and Noah, Enoch, and Seth, and Adam will be called a son of the living God.