

Lesson 8

1. ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Archaeological excavations and research have provided a great deal of valuable information concerning Mesopotamia and Canaan. Ur Kašdim or Ur of the Chaldees (אֵוֶר כַּשְׁדִּים) is a place mentioned in Genesis. Not only is there much debate in interpreting Ur Kašdim as Abraham's birthplace, but also identifying this location. Refer to Allan R. Millard "Where Was Abraham's Ur?" in *Biblical Archaeology Review* May/June 2001, "Ur of the Chaldees" by Sir Leonard Woolley, and similar works.

Refer to a map showing the area. Abraham was called from an idolatrous environment – out of city life, where it would be difficult to separate from surrounding society and culture, to a nomadic existence where he could be independent of human environment.

2. SHEM, HAM AND JAPHETH

In Genesis 9:25-27 there are prophecies concerning Noah's sons:

“And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.”

Some historic writers, including Josephus, make a connection between Shem, Ham and Japheth, and different racial groups. In medieval ethnography, the world was believed to have been divided into three large-scale racial groupings, corresponding to the three classical continents: the Japhetic peoples of Europe, the Semitic peoples of Asia and the Hamitic peoples of Africa.

A further great detail of history is the different languages which gave rise to the different nations. The history of the divided tongues is found in Gen. 11:1-9. This has been a factor in preventing mutual understanding amongst the descendants of Adam, and has prevented them building a united community. These differences of colour and language have set the pattern of historical events and they show their general affect right down to our present time. Through Christ, however, all people are made one and in the Kingdom they shall be taught a pure language.

The nations descended from Ham and Japheth largely disappear from the narrative after Genesis 10. The reason for their names being recorded is given in Gen. 10 (last verse) to explain the distribution into nations. The opening of Genesis 11 explains how and why the division originated. The story in Genesis then carries on through the line of Shem into which family Abram was born, and through whom God's purpose was to develop.

3. STAGES OF ABRAHAM'S CALL

There seem to be two stages in the call of Abraham, Acts 7:2-3 “when he dwelt in Mesopotamia”(i.e. in Ur and Gen. 15:7 implies) which makes no mention of leaving his father's house; then a second call in Haran after Terah's death (Gen. 12:1. Note RV omits “had”) when Abraham is told to leave also “his father's house” i.e. the family sepulcher where Terah is buried and also other relatives were living (e.g. Nahor, who apparently followed the others to Haran

even if he didn't travel with them. Although Nahor is not mentioned in Gen. 11:31, his grandson Laban is in Haran in Padan-aram Gen. 28:5, 10; 29:4-5; and his son Bethuel also in Padan-aram, Gen. 25:20, which is called the city of Nahor, Gen. 24:10).

The location of Haran is open to question. Marston, "New Light on the Old Testament" gives reasons for placing it near Damascus. He also quotes Josephus (Antiquities I; 7, 2) in support of this view. See "Additional Notes for Teachers", Lesson 11.

TEACHING METHODS

1. Review previous lessons and connect this one with Gen. 3:15
2. Reconstruct living conditions at Ur with illustrations and show God's plan of separation for Abraham.
3. Underline the promises, their significance and fulfillment. Ask the scholars to learn them by heart.
4. Demonstrate the outstanding faith of Abraham – Father of the faithful and friend of God.