

## Introduction

How many of you watched the Winter Olympics? Our family watched some of the figure skating, speed skating, snowboarding, and skiing events. We watched the cross country skiers, the freestyle skiers, and also some of the slalom skiers. Slalom is an alpine skiing event and where skiers must ski between poles or gates. The slalom course is constructed by laying out a series of gates, formed by alternating pairs of red and blue poles. The skier must pass between the two poles forming the gate, with the tips of both skis and the skier's feet passing between the poles. A course has 55 to 75 gates for men and 40 to 60 for women. The vertical drop for a men's course is 591 to 722 ft and slightly less for women. So skiers are racing down a steep slope and navigating through each gate in an effort to cross the finish line in the best time.

In the Men's Giant Slalom, an Austrian by the name of Marcel Hirscher, won the Gold medal. Marcel is the winner of a record seven consecutive World Cup titles, Hirscher has also won nine medals at the Alpine Skiing World Championships (six gold) a silver medal in slalom at the 2014 Winter Olympics and two gold medals in the combined and giant slalom at the 2018 Winter Olympics. Due to his record number of Overall titles, many years of extreme dominance of both slalom and giant slalom and men's super ranking, he is considered the best alpine skier in history.

We had an American skiing superstar named Mikaela Shiffrin win the gold in the Women's Giant Slalom. Shiffrin, aged twenty-two, is the reigning World Cup all-around skiing champion and current top women's skier in the world. Marcel and Mikaela have mastered the art of skiing down the slalom courses in record time while navigating through each of the gates on the course.

Why do I bring up slalom skiing or giant slalom skiing? I bring it up because today's text is like a slalom race. We have a race course with gates all the way down the slope. We will be skiing down the slope very quickly. We will not be paying much attention to the gates, other than making sure we get through each gate. There is not much information given about the various gates. The object is to get through all the gates and get to the bottom. It is the finish line that we are interested in.

In our slalom race today, the starting line is Shem. All the descendants come from Noah. Each of the descendants covered are from Shem, who was the oldest son of Noah and had the birthright. All of the descendants mentioned are the oldest sons. We saw some of the other sons of Shem given in Genesis 10. They were mentioned there because they were all scattered into different language groups. In our text today, we are not interested in learning about all the sons, the various language groups, and where they settled. We are interested in getting to the finish line. The finish line is Abraham. But to get to Abraham, we ski quickly down the slalom course, going through each of the eldest sons or gates.

We are skiing down a slalom course because we have very little information about any of the sons. We will not be stopping or slowing down at any of the gates because there is not much information given. Our text says that the man lived so many years and had a son by a certain name. He lived X number of years afterwards and had other sons and daughters. Then, it repeats the same format for each generation. The only things that change are the names and the ages that they lived. Consequently, we won't spend any time at any one gate. We will go through the gates like we are skiing downhill at full speed. We just have to make sure we go through each of the

gates while getting to Abraham. Our Slalom course today has eight gates. Our starting line is Shem, and our finish line is Abram. Let's begin our race with Shem in verse ten.

**Start Line: Shem** (Gen 11:10-11)

(Gen 11:10-11) "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; {11} and Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and he had other sons and daughters."

In Genesis 6:3 God said He was not going to strive with man forever, and He limited his days to one hundred and twenty years. But, this is a process. God did not just have everyone die that was over 120 years old. Noah was five hundred when he gave birth to Shem. The flood came one hundred years later, when Noah was six hundred. Noah lived another three hundred and fifty years. Shem was one hundred when he became the father of Arpachshad, which was two years after the flood. Shem lived another five hundred years and had other sons and daughters. The one hundred and twenty year limit had been set in motion but was not fulfilled yet.

(Gen 6:3) "Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

**Gate One: Arpachshad** (Gen 11:12-13)

(Gen 11:12-13) "Arpachshad lived thirty-five years, and became the father of Shelah; {13} and Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Shelah, and he had other sons and daughters."

Arpachshad is our first gate to go through. We see a change here in Arpachshad. He only lived thirty-five years before becoming the father of Shelah. He lived another four hundred and three years and had other sons and daughters. Notice that Noah lived 950 years, Shem lived 600 years, and now Arpachshad lived only 438 years. That would be a long time to us, but it is less than half the life span that his grandpa Noah lived.

A couple of weeks ago in the middle of the night I had an impression about going to see a man and woman in the apartments near here. They are both elderly, and I have been trying to develop a relationship with them. The impression that I had was to ask them the two EE questions. If you died tonight do you know for sure that you will go to heaven? The second question is, "if you died tonight and you stood at the gates of heaven, and God asks you, 'why should I let you in?' what will you say to Him? So, I went over to their apartment Friday afternoon. God opened up a door to share with them. They were telling me about their medical conditions. It appears that both of them may have cancer. I shared with them that all of us are going to die. It is not a matter of if, but rather a question of when. So, that allowed me to ask the EE questions. As I shared with them, the Holy Spirit was moving on the woman, and she teared up. The real question for us is, are we ready for death. In Hebrews we are told that it was appointed for all men to die once and after this comes judgment. Are we ready to stand before God at judgment?

(Heb 9:27) "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,"

I also shared the good news with them. Jesus said that whoever believes in Him has eternal life and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. That is wonderful news. We do not have to wonder where we will spend our eternity after we die. By placing our faith in Christ right now, we bypass judgment and go straight to heaven.

(John 5:24) "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."

#### **Gate Two: Shelah** (Gen 11:14-15)

(Gen 11:14-15) "Shelah lived thirty years, and became the father of Eber; {15} and Shelah lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Eber, and he had other sons and daughters."

The second gate is Shelah. His name means "to send". He lived thirty years and became the father of Eber. He lived four hundred and three years more and had other sons and daughters. We do not know how many sons and how many daughters. We don't know the names of these other children. What we have here is the lineage and it passes down through the oldest son. Shelah lived to the age of 433, five years less than his father.

#### **Gate Three: Eber** (Gen 11:16-17)

(Gen 11:16-17) "Eber lived thirty-four years, and became the father of Peleg; {17} and Eber lived four hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Peleg, and he had other sons and daughters."

Eber is our third gate. His name means "beyond." He lived thirty-four years and became the father of Peleg. He lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters. He lived to be 464 years, which is significantly longer than Shelah or Arpachshad.

The Scriptures teach us that our days are numbered before there is yet one. God knows how many days He has appointed for us to live. I also believe that we have a part to play in our days. In Psalm 55, we find that men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out half their days. I also believe that through proper diet and exercise we can live out our days, but through poor diet and other bad habits we can shorten our lifespan.

(Psalm 139:16) "Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them."

(Psalm 55:23) "But You, O God, will bring them down to the pit of destruction; Men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out half their days. But I will trust in You."

#### **Gate Four: Peleg** (Gen 11:18-19)

(Gen 11:18-19) "Peleg lived thirty years, and became the father of Reu; {19} and Peleg lived two hundred and nine years after he became the father of Reu, and he had other sons and daughters."

The fourth gate is Peleg, and his name means to split apart or divide. We saw in Genesis 10 that he was named Peleg because in his days the earth was divided. Peleg lived thirty years and became the father of Reu. He only lived 209 years afterwards. His lifespan was only 239 years, which is the shortest lifespan of anyone other than Abel, who was murdered by Cain.

(Gen 10:25) "Two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother's name was Joktan."

#### **Gate Five: Reu** (Gen 11:20-21)

(Gen 11:20-21) "Reu lived thirty-two years, and became the father of Serug; {21} and Reu lived two hundred and seven years after he became the father of Serug, and he had other sons and daughters."

Reu is our fifth gate. His name means to associate with, keep company with, or be a companion. Everyone needs a friend, and Reu was a friend and companion. The Bible says that a man of many friends comes to ruin. We can have a lot of associates, but we can't have that many true friends or companions. We don't have the time to be with lots of different people. Also, friendship requires trust, and trust takes time. We don't share our souls with people we don't know and trust.

(Pr 18:24) "A man of too many friends comes to ruin, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

Reu lived thirty-two years and became the father of Serug. He lived 207 years afterwards and had other sons and daughters. His lifespan was 239 years, which was the same exact number of years that his father lived. I believe that this is significant. I see God's hand in gradually reducing the years of everyone. He was not going to strive with men forever.

#### **Gate Six: Serug** (Gen 11:22-23)

(Gen 11:22-23) "Serug lived thirty years, and became the father of Nahor; {23} and Serug lived two hundred years after he became the father of Nahor, and he had other sons and daughters."

Serug is our sixth gate. We are getting closer to the bottom of the course. Serug's name means intertwined or weaved together. We don't know if he was a peace maker and known for unity, or perhaps he was a carpet maker. Yet another possibility was that his father Reu acknowledged that children are woven together by God in our mother's wombs. Serug lived thirty years and became the father of Nahor. He lived 200 years afterwards, so his lifespan was only 230 years.

(Ps 139:13) "For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb."

#### **Gate Seven: Nahor** (Gen 11:24-25)

(Gen 11:24-25) "Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and became the father of Terah; {25} and Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years after he became the father of Terah, and he had other sons and daughters."

Nahor is our seventh gate to ski through. Nahor's name mean to snort or to snore. One of our daughters used to snore when we were on the PGA Tour. My daughter Amy took it upon herself to find a cure. When her sister began to snore, she stuck a tennis ball under her back. The daughter that snored would turn on her side in her sleep and the snoring would stop. I don't know if Nahor's family knew that trick, because they named him Nahor, "one who snores."

Nahor lived twenty-nine years and became the father of Terah. He only lived 119 years afterwards. So, his lifespan was only 148 years. This was the shortest life so far. We are not only coming down a ski slope, the graph of lifespans is also coming down.

#### **Gate Eight: Terah** (Gen 11:26, 32)

(Gen 11:26, 32) "Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran....{32} The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran."

Terah is our eighth and final gate to go through to get to Abram. Scholars are unsure of the meaning of his name. He was seventy years old when he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. This appears to be the second set of triplets that we have in the Scriptures. In Genesis 6, Noah was five hundred years old and became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Terah lived another 205 years, for a total lifespan of 275 years.

#### **Finish Line: Abram** (Gen 11:27-31)

(Gen 11:27-31) "Now these are the records of the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot. {28} Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. {29} Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah. {30} 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 out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there."

The finish line is Abram. This is Moses' introduction of Abram and so he gives us more information about Terah and his descendants. Abram's brother Haran has a son named Lot, and we are going to discover more about Lot in the next few chapters. Abram takes Lot into his family and takes care of his brother. We also find out some information about Terah's other son, Nahor. He married a lady named Milcah, who was the daughter of Haran. Moses also tells us that Abram married Sarai. In a conversation that Abraham has with Abililech in Genesis 20:12, we find out that Sarah was actually Abraham's half-sister. Ancient Hebrew writings record that Terah's first wife was Yona, and his second wife is Tehevita, by whom he had Sarah.<sup>1</sup> We do not know if Terah had two wives at one time or if his wife died and he remarried. But, in any case, Terah had children with two different wives and Abram married one of his half sisters.

(Gen 20:12) "Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife;"

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary on Genesis 20:12

We not only find out about their wives, but we find out where they were living. They were in Ur, the land of the Chaldeans, which is in Iraq, near the Euphrates river. The area of Iran where I grew up is not very far from this area. Then, they moved to the land of Canaan, as far as Haran. Haran is now in a village in Sanliurfa, Turkey. It was a move of about 577 miles from where they were living.

Why the introduction to Abraham? Why is Abraham the finish line? The lineage of Abraham is very important. He is considered the father of the Jews and every Jew needed to be able to trace his lineage back to Abraham. The lineage was also important for the priesthood. A priest had to prove his lineage or he was excluded from the priesthood. In Nehemiah 7:63-64 we read, *"Of the priests: the sons of Hobaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, the sons of Barzillai, who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai, the Gileadite, and was named after them. {64} These searched among their ancestral registration, but it could not be located; therefore they were considered unclean and excluded from the priesthood."* They could not perform the services of the priesthood. They could not eat the priests portions of the offerings. Even worse, they were considered unclean. It was important for a priest to know his lineage.

The lineages from Adam to Noah, Noah to Abraham, and then from Noah to Jesus are all vitally important. In the genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3:23-38, His lineage is traced all the way back to Adam, the son of God. So having the records from Adam to Noah, and Noah to Abraham are very important.

Tracing Jesus' genealogy back to Adam is also a crucial fulfillment of prophecy. Adam's sin brought judgment and death into the world, but in Genesis 3:15, a Savior was promised—the Seed of the woman who would bruise the head of the serpent. Jesus was the seed of Adam, and in 1 John 3:8 we see that Jesus came to strike, bruise, and destroy the works of the enemy. It was necessary for His lineage to go back to Adam.

(Gen 3:15) "And 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."

(1 John 3:8) "the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil."

Jesus Christ is also called the "Last Adam" in 1 Corinthians 15:45. Then, in Romans 5:18-19 we find that through the transgression of one, that is the first Adam, all men were condemned, but through one act of righteousness, there resulted a justification of life to all men. It is important to trace Christ's genealogy all the way back to Adam.

(1 Cor 15:45) "So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit."

(Rom 5:18-19) "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. {19} For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous."

In the gospel of Matthew, Christ's lineage was traced back to Abraham. Abraham is considered the father of the Jewish people. He is known as father Abraham. In Zachariah's prophecy in Luke 1:73, he referred to Abraham as "*our father.*" In Luke 13:16, when Jesus was dealing with the synagogue official about healing on the Sabbath, He said, "*And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?*"

In Luke 19:9, Zaccheus has just repented and trusted in Christ as his Messiah. Jesus said to Zaccheus, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham." Many years ago in children's ministry they use to sing a song about Father Abraham. It went like this:

Father Abraham had many sons, many sons had father Abraham.  
I am one of them, and so are you, so let's just praise the Lord.  
Right hand

Father Abraham had many sons, many sons had father Abraham.  
I am one of them, and so are you, so let's just praise the Lord.  
Right hand, left hand....

The song would keep repeating and a different body motion would be added to each verse. The main point of the song is that we are children of Abraham. Abraham is considered the Father of faith. Abraham is considered the father of faith for several reasons. First, his name, Abram, means exalted father. Later, God changed his name to Abraham, which means father of multitudes. He is a spiritual father, and his name was prophetic of his calling.

Abraham is also called the father of faith because in Genesis 15:6, Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Abraham, while uncircumcised, believed God and it was by his faith in God that he was reckoned as righteous. Many of the Jews never got that message. They were depending on circumcision and works to earn their righteousness. Abraham understood that it was not by works, but it was by faith that we are made righteous. Paul spends most of Romans 4 teaching that it is those who have placed their faith in Christ that are true sons of Abraham. Then, in Galatians 3:7, he reiterates it by saying, "*Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.*" Zaccheus had believed and placed his faith in Jesus the Messiah, and so he was truly a son of Abraham. To the Jews, tracing your lineage back to Abraham was a critical thing.

In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul wrote, "*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*" This is an important part of the gospel. We will never live a perfect life. Our good works are as filthy rags and will not earn us a spot in heaven. Abraham was not righteous because of the Law; he was reckoned as righteous because of his faith. Romans tells us that the wages of our sin is death. What you and I earn, our wages, for our sins is death and eternal separation from God, not righteousness. When we believe and put our trust in God, we enter into a covenant relationship with Him. There is an exchange. Christ took our sins upon Himself and paid the penalty for our sins. He gave us His righteousness, and we are righteous because of our faith in Christ. We are saved by our faith in what Christ has done for us, not as a result of works.

Abraham is one of the key figures in the Bible. We are going through Genesis and the next fourteen chapters, Genesis 12-25, are about the life of Abraham. There are 216 references to Abraham in the Old Testament, and 67 references to Abraham in the New Testament. He is a key figure in the Bible. In our text today, which was written by Moses, I get the sense that Moses was in a hurry to get from Noah to Abraham, and he went down the slalom course like he was skiing for the Olympic gold medal.

## Conclusion

Abraham is considered the father of our faith. Paul made it clear that the true sons of Abraham are sons of faith. The Jews considered themselves sons of Abraham, but Jesus and Paul made it very clear that those who believe and have received Christ by faith are the true sons of Abraham. This morning as we come to a close, let me ask you, "Are you a son of Abraham?" Have you come to the place in your life where you have believed in your heart that Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead? Have you received Christ into your life by confessing Him as your Lord? That is what Zaccheus did. He repented and placed his faith in Christ. If you would like to receive Christ this morning and become a son of Abraham, it is a free gift. Paul wrote in Romans 6:3 that the wages of our sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. It cost Jesus a lot, but salvation is a free gift for us. The only things required of us is to believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord. This morning, if you would like to receive Christ, pray this prayer with me.

"Lord Jesus, I recognize that I am a sinner and that my sins have separated me from you. I believe that You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I ask you to come into my life, and I now confess You as the Lord and Master of my life. Amen."

The second question that I have is also based on Zaccheus. When He became a son of Abraham by placing his faith in Christ, there were changes in his life. He said that he would give half of his possessions to the poor, and that he would pay back anyone that he had defrauded four times as much. His declarations and actions prompted Jesus to say, "today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham." His life changed as a result of confessing Jesus as Lord.

(Luke 19:8) "Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much. {9} And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham."

In John 8:37-41, the Jewish leaders claimed to be Abraham's children. Jesus acknowledged that they were Abraham's descendants, but He told them that they were not Abraham's children. He said, "if you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham." This morning, are you doing the deeds of Abraham? Does your life reflect the fact that you are following Christ? Is there anything that you need to confess to God this morning? Are there any changes that you need to make this morning. Take a minute and confess those to God. Let's pray.

(John 8:37-41) "I know that you are Abraham's descendants; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you....{39} They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus \*said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham."