

Lot Chooses

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Gen. 13:10–11

Events:

1. Abram's family returns to Canaan from the land of Egypt.
2. The families of Abram and Lot are forced to separate, and Lot moves to the area of Sodom and Gomorrah.
3. God repeats His promise to give Abram many children and grandchildren, as well as the land.
4. Abram is called to the plains of Mamre and builds another altar there.

What does this passage teach us?

Verses 1–4. Abram returned to Canaan with substantial wealth, thanks to the blessing of God upon him in the land of Egypt. Since the beginning of time, wealth has served as a major distraction and deterrent from faithful service to God (1 Tim. 6:9, 17–18; Jam. 5:1–5). However, this was not the case for Abram. He was constant in his faith and continued to worship and serve Yahweh in the land of Canaan. Immediately on his return from Egypt, he worshiped at the altar that he built earlier. Genesis records Abram doing this at least twelve times. Abram was a God-worshiper.

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Verses 5–13. Now the families of Lot and Abram have gained considerable wealth, and this has resulted in conflict between the two households over grazing land. Again, Abram demonstrates his faith in God and his generosity by giving Lot first dibs in the choice of land. Lot takes the land that appears most fertile in the Jordan valley, which also happens to be the territory of Sodom and Gomorrah. How often do people place economic well-being above the spiritual well-being of their families! When moving into an area to take advantage of a lucrative job offer, Christians fail to consider whether the spiritual climate, the quality of churches, or the moral environment of the neighborhood is conducive to the health of their families. Consequently, after twenty years in a spiritual wasteland, they watch their families decline spiritually, although prospering materially. This is the sad story of Lot and his family, and it has been repeated in the lives of millions of families to this day.

Verses 14–18. In these final verses, Yahweh reminds Abram of the initial covenant promise made on his move into the land of Canaan. This extraordinary promise of children greater in number than the dust of the earth provides a challenge of faith to a man who still does not have a single child. In a very real sense, Abram is alone on the earth. He lives far from his extended family, and he has no church or fellow believers with whom to worship. Here is one solitary man on the earth walking in relationship with the living God, the Creator of heaven and earth. One day, Abram's family will cover the earth, and will inherit a land as far as eye can see—a land without boundaries in the earth. This great promise is finally realized in the present age, where millions, if not billions, of people have inherited Abram's faith and are counted as his seed.

How does this passage teach us to walk with God in faith and obedience?

1. Riches can be a major trap for many people, tempting them to put their trust in material wealth rather than in the living God. This is especially true of the average American today. These people simply see no need to attend church on Sunday and give God sacrifices of praise and tithes, because they have wealth far beyond what it takes to survive. If at any point we begin to put our material comfort and our wealth ahead of

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worshipping God in family worship and Sabbath worship, then we must repent of it.

2. This passage provides a basis for the institution of private property ownership. In general, families should not share property, as each household is called to take dominion of some area of God's earth in real estate and commercial business (or ministry). God intends for us all to own our own property, and that property should be protected from those who would try to steal it.
3. When cake is served, do you ever reach for the biggest and best piece? In the words of Christ, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." A life of self-centered greed will never produce happiness. How often do children seek their own comfort first before seeing to the needs of others? This kind of behavior betrays a selfishness in the heart, but it also illustrates a lack of faith in God to provide the very best for them. Seek the good of others first, and God will take care of your needs. In the end, greed will only yield the worst possible results, just as Lot eventually lost everything in the destruction of Sodom. Instead of grabbing the first or the biggest piece of cake, hold back and see what God will do for you when you serve others first.
4. It is not always easy to believe God's promises. Sometimes we look at the challenging circumstances that test us, and we cannot see how God will turn these things to our good as He promised in Romans 8:28. But, like Abram, we must still believe and keep on believing for years and years. Let us not give up on God. He will test our faith and our ability to wait on Him over the years. These are always faith-growing experiences. Although it may not appear that God will or can intervene, we must believe that God will be true to His Word, and He is powerful and wise enough to keep every one of His promises.

Questions:

1. What are the themes of Chapters 1 through 13?
2. At least how many times did Abram call on the name of Yahweh in the book of Genesis?

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3. How did Abram show himself to be generous with his nephew Lot?
4. What was the best land that Lot picked for himself?
5. What made it difficult for Abram to believe God when God told him he would have many children and grandchildren?

Family Discussion Questions:

1. Do we prioritize the spiritual condition of our home over our economic condition (something that Lot failed to do)? Before we move into an area, what sorts of things should we look into, to assure that the spiritual health of the family will be maintained?
2. What are the sorts of things that are testing the faith of our family right now? Or have in the past?

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Lot Captured

And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan. Gen. 14:14

Events:

1. Four kings make war with Sodom and Gomorrah.
2. Lot and his family are captured.
3. Abram pursues and overcomes the enemy.
4. Melchizedek blesses Abram.

What does this passage teach us?

Verses 1–13. It wasn't long after Lot chose the best land for himself down in the Jordan valley that he found himself in serious trouble. For the hearts of men are so filled with pride and envy that they seek to build their empires by war. This was the legacy of Cain who killed his brother for preeminence. Thus, the wars of nations are inevitable as long as pride and hatred lurk in the hearts of men. Until children cease fighting over who gets the last piece of cake, and unless neighbors can work out their differences with humility and longsuffering, the wars of nations will never cease. Now the city states of Sodom and Gomorrah got caught up in these wars. They lost a key battle, and Lot was captured by the enemy.

Verses 14–17. This key passage provides the first example of a godly system of government and defense. This story is of vital importance for any Christian that might want to address the area of civil government according to God's righteous principles. First of all, Abram covenanted (or confederated) with other leaders in the area. He didn't have the unquenchable imperialist zeal that typically drove

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the centralization of powers in America and the colonialism of Spain, Portugal, England, and other empires. Christians do not aim to centralize power, but rather covenant together by means of a contract or constitution, and severely limit the bounds of that covenant by careful stipulation. This was the original intent of the founders of our American federal republic, until it was radically changed to a single centralized state in the late 19th century. Some of our early founding fathers, like Patrick Henry, argued that the Constitution should have begun with the phrase, “We the States,” instead of, “We the People.” Covenantal thinking marks the minds of men who think like Christians.

Also note that Abram engaged in a legitimate defensive form of warfare. These nations had unlawfully pillaged the cities of the plain, and kidnapped Lot and his family in the process. With very few exceptions in history, just war is defined as defensive warfare. Unfortunately, the hearts of men gravitate towards preemptive war, forming unwarranted entangling alliances with foreign powers, or outright imperialism, because the lure for power is practically irresistible.

This passage also provides a basis for self-defense. It is appropriate to fight to defend our families and our homeland when aggressive forces attack. Generally, it is the responsibility of the civil magistrate to protect us from invading kings and armies, but when the government does not protect, it is the responsibility of the head of the household to protect his family and his relatives from those that kill, plunder, and steal. The basis for the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution lies here. This passage also gives us biblical approval for keeping and using weapons like guns and swords. In the New Testament, Jesus also commended the keeping of swords for defense (Lk. 22:36).

Verses 18–24. On Abram’s victorious return from the battle, two men approached him—a man named Melchizedek and the king of Sodom. Melchizedek was a mysterious character, although it is clear from this passage and others that he was a true priest of the true God. He was a figure of Jesus Christ in that he served as both a priest and a king in Jerusalem. The Old Testament priests were drawn from the line of Levi, and Christ, being of the tribe of Judah, would thus not have qualified as a priest. However, Psalm 110:4 and Hebrews 7:17 certify that Christ is a Priest after the legitimate order of Melchizedek. The author of the book of Hebrews asserted that the authority and position of Christ was

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established here in Genesis 14, since their father Abraham submitted himself to the priesthood of Melchizedek by giving him a tithe of his goods.

Melchizedek also provided hospitality to the men returning from the battle. This is the first biblical reference to hospitality or “love of strangers” in a long sequence of references contained in Scripture. Hospitality is a way of life for Christians, although in modern times it has been sadly neglected in favor of institutionalized, commercialized hospitality. People seldom open their homes to wayfaring strangers today. But this was common for millennia among the godly and in some cases, among the ungodly as well. Hospitality should especially mark the lifestyle of those who lead in New Testament churches.

In the same pattern established for the Levitical priests (Num. 6:23), Melchizedek blessed Abram. A blessing received from a holy man of God is influential and important in the life of the one blessed.

The second individual that met Abram upon his return was the pagan king of Sodom, who was particularly advantaged by the recent victory. Abram’s rejection of the offer of material reward from this king is an interesting addition to the story. From Abram’s testimony it is clear that his motivation was the glory of God. By lifting his hands to God, he signifies an expectation that all blessings come from Yahweh in heaven. This marked Abram’s perspective throughout his lifetime. In Egypt, he fully expected maximum resistance from Pharaoh, but God forced Pharaoh to bless Abram. Then, Abram offered the first choice of land to Lot, such that nobody could say that Abram had squeezed Lot out of the best land. And he didn’t want anybody to think that a pagan king had made him rich. By faith, Abram would wait for God to write his paycheck and increase his goods.

How does this passage teach us to walk with God in faith and obedience?

1. “Every good gift comes from above.” God gives us our paychecks. If some king or employer sees himself as the ultimate source of our blessing and happiness, we ought to reject that notion outright. Moreover, we should never look at our success as the product of our own hands. Just as Abram did in this passage, let us always give God the glory for any success, power, or riches that we achieve.

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2. It is appropriate to raise our sons to defend their families as Abram did in Genesis 14. This is a responsibility God gives every man. Following Abram's lead, Nehemiah also instructed the men of Israel to fight for their wives, sons, and daughters (Neh. 4:14). Also, Psalm 82:3 encourages us to "defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked." This is the duty of all faithful men.
3. Following our father Abram who paid tithes to this priest and king in Jerusalem, we bring our tithes and offerings to Jesus our Priest, after the order of Melchizedek. We accept His sacrifice and His blessing, and we submit ourselves to His kingly rule in all parts of our lives.

Questions:

1. What are the themes of Chapters 1 through 14?
2. How does this passage teach us the importance of self defense?
3. From what city did this mysterious priest and king, Melchizedek, come?
4. Who is a priest after the order of Melchizedek?
5. Why did Abram refuse to take a reward from the King of Sodom?

Family Discussion Questions:

1. What sort of opportunities have we taken or should we take to show hospitality to strangers?
2. How are we preparing our sons in our family and church to be faithful in their Nehemiah 4:14 duties?

Covenant Confirmed

In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: Gen. 15:18

Events:

1. Abram has a vision and asks God for confirmation of the covenant promises.
2. The covenant is confirmed by the sacrifice of animals.
3. The Lord prophesies Israel's captivity in Egypt and eventual deliverance.

What does this passage teach us?

Verses 1–6. Genesis is a book of firsts, and that is what makes the book so fundamental in God's revelation to man. As God's revelation progressively unfolds, we learn something about God, something about man, and something about God's relationship to man. For the first time in this developing revelation, Abram learns that God is his Savior. Using words like "shield" and "exceeding great reward," Yahweh presented Himself to Abram as his Savior. Since the fall, man has not been able to deny that he has a problem and he needs a Savior. The only problem is that man defines the problem wrongly and seeks salvation in himself or in some false god. Later in the Gospels, the angel announced the coming of a Savior who will "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Thus, we are called to trust Jesus, the Son of God as our Savior, even as Abram was called to trust God as his Savior. God is the Savior, and He will save us from our sins. There is really very little difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament, except that Abram did not know that this Savior's name is

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Jesus, and He would be born in a manger and die on a cross. But Abram did know the basic fact: God was his Savior.

This is the third time that God issued the promise of a seed that would produce a huge number of descendants for Abram. Again, this formed a test of faith for Abram, who remained childless even as an old man. Pointing out that he had no children, Abram suggested that one of the servants in his home could produce a child who would receive the inheritance and carry on the family name. Yahweh rejected this “Plan B” outright and demanded faith on Abram’s part.

Verse 6 is one of the most important verses in the Old Testament, quoted by the Apostle Paul in the book of Romans:

“And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”

The way of salvation has not changed since the earliest days. For salvation always belongs to men and women of faith. Although God’s promises may have seemed far-fetched to some, Abram believed the words that God spoke to him. He believed in the promises of God. Because of his faith, he was counted a righteous man in the eyes of God. Therefore, you can see from the earliest times no one is saved or counted among the righteous for performing x number of good works. We are considered righteous because we believe the promises of God and are willing to hang our lives on those promises.

Verses 7–11. Abram asked for a confirmation of these covenant promises and Yahweh provided that confirmation by means of a common form used for covenants or contracts in the Middle East countries at that time. Today, men will sign written contracts when they come to an agreement of some kind; in ancient times men cut animals in half and the parties passed through the pieces and thereby confirmed the covenant (Jer. 34:18). In fact, the Hebrew word for covenant is rooted in the word “to cut.” Thus, if you understand the nature of these contracts, you know that Abram was only asking God to sign the contract between them. Abram cut three animals in half (a cow, a goat, and a ram), and made a path between the pieces of the dead animals.

This is a mysterious text, introducing a number of interesting questions. Why did Abram drive the birds of prey away? Why was he so concerned that they not

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feast upon the dead meat? What is the light and smoking furnace that passes through the pieces? Comparing Scripture with Scripture, we find that birds of the air sometimes represent the Devil attempting to steal away the Word or the covenant from God's people. Smoke is a reference to God's judgment, and light is a reference to His truth and salvation. The smoke and light represent God Himself. You may remember that the presence of God in the wilderness was signified by a cloud by day, and fire or light by night (Exod. 13:21–22).

Verses 12–21. The chapter finishes with Abram again receiving a vision, and this time, Yahweh provided him with a prophetic revelation concerning the next 400 years. Although God had promised the land to his descendants, this did not take place immediately. There was to be an interim period of 400 years in which the children of Abram would labor under the affliction of a foreign power. Of course, this prophecy was concerning Israel's captivity in the land of Egypt. But all of this was according to God's plan, for the land still had to wait until the corruption of the Canaanites had reached some intolerable limit. Four hundred years prior to the great Exodus, God had laid out a plan whereby His people would be gloriously delivered from a great empire and the Canaanites would turn over their land to the people of God. Even as we trust God's promises, we know that God's plans are never frustrated.

How does this passage teach us to walk with God in faith and obedience?

1. The Bible contains many promises issued by God, concerning our salvation. In it, He describes Himself as a Savior in hundreds of expressions, forms, stories, and examples. The pages of Scripture are filled with promises, so the question that faces us today is this: are we willing to take God at His Word? Do we believe that God is good to fulfill His promises to us? Is He really our Shield and our Savior, as He was for this man Abram, the father of all believers?
2. The Bible says that the "meek shall inherit the earth." The fulfillment of God's promise comes in different ways at different times. Abraham's faithful seed did inherit the land of Canaan and his seed of believers continue to inherit the entire earth as is promised in the Word. As