

## **GENESIS 13 – PROMISES, PROMISES!**

### **A. Abram and Lot separate.**

#### **1. (1-4) Abram returns to the land promised to him.**

***Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South.***

***Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.***

***And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD.***

#### **a. To the place where his tent had been at the beginning:**

Even though Abram came back from Egypt with great riches, he returned to the same **place** as before. He was right back where he started. Essentially, Abram's time in Egypt was *wasted* time. God could have and would have provided for his needs in Canaan, even in a time of famine (Genesis 12:10).

i. Abram should not have used the blessing God brought to him in Egypt as a justification for going there. Even though God is great enough to bring good even when we disobey, there is still a cost built into disobedience.

ii. Abram's unbelief took him from his place of worship; it led him into sin, and caused him to lead others into sin. It made him more confident in his ability to lie than in the protecting power of God. It even broke apart his family for a while. Finally, even an ungodly king rightly rebuked him.

#### **b. To the place of the altar which he had made there at**

**first:** Yet, at this point Abram did what he should. Instead of torturing himself about his past sin, he got busy doing what he needed to do: living with the tent as a pilgrim and the **altar** as a worshipper, calling on the name of the LORD.

i. The church has always had the challenge of what to do with believers who slip into sin and want to come back into the church. For example, in the third century, the heroes of the faith were the martyrs and the confessors, but there were also many *lapsed* believers who failed under the threat of

persecution. Some churches were too lax, admitting those lapsed ones back as if nothing happened. Some were too harsh toward the lapsed, saying they could never come back to the church and be used of God. Most churches did the right thing: they allowed the lapsed back, but basically as beginners again, not pretending as if nothing happened.

ii. Here, Abram came back into the Promised Land basically as a beginner. He came back to Bethel, back with the tent and the altar, back doing what he should.

iii. God wants us to walk in our *first* love and our *first* works (Revelation 2:4-5).

## 2. **Contention between Abram's and Lot's hired workers.**

**(5-7) Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land.**

a. **Lot also, who went with Abram:** God commanded Abram to leave his family behind when he came to the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:1), but Abram brought his nephew Lot along with him. Trouble like this was the result.

i. This conflict came after Abram did the right thing. When we get right with God, we can often expect attack from the devil.

b. **There was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock:** Something had to be done about this strife between the estates of Abram and Lot, because they could not continue a conflict like this before the unbelieving inhabitants of Canaan.

i. When the **Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land**, and saw the men of Abram and Lot fighting, they must have thought, "Oh, they're just like us. They say they

worship another God, a God they say is the true God, but I see they are really just like us.”

ii. “Many people will never listen to what any believer says because of what some believers are.” (Barnhouse)

c. **Their possessions were so great:** There was a great difference between the riches of Abram and the riches of Lot. They both had great wealth.

### 3. **Abram’s generous offer to Lot.**

**(8-9) So Abram said to Lot, “Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.”**

a. **Is not the whole land before you?** Since Abram was the eldest, and God gave all the land to Abram (not to Lot), it was pure generosity on Abram’s part that caused him to make this offer to Lot.

b. **If you take the left, then I will go to the right:** Abram was able to fight when the occasion demanded it. He did not yield to Lot out of weakness, but out of love and trust in God. A few acres of grazing land didn’t seem worth fighting for to a man who lived with an eternal perspective.

i. God was glorified when Paul, out of love, waived his right to be supported by the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:14-18). God was glorified when Jesus, out of love, waived his right to an existence that knew no human suffering or trial by experience (Philippians 2:5-11).

ii. Abram fulfilled the New Testament principle of love: *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others* (Philippians 2:4).

c. **If you go to the right, then I will go to the left:** Right or left, Abram knew he could trust God. He did it because he learned God would provide for his needs, and he did not have

to worry about being too generous. Abram knew whatever Lot chose God would make sure Abram prospered.

i. In Egypt, Abram thought he had to take his fate into his own hands. He had to look out for himself. Now, he was wiser and was willing to let God look out for his interests. Right or left, it didn't matter to Abram, because God would be there.

ii. Because he trusted in God, Abram did not have to be obsessed with his own rights and neither do we. Everything we receive is the free gift of God and has nothing to do with our concept of rights.

#### 4. **Lot chooses his portion of land.**

**(10-13) And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom. But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD.**

a. **Like the garden of the LORD:** Lot made his choice purely based on what he could see with his **eyes**. He cared only for the material abundance of the land, and cared nothing for how it would impact him and his family spiritually.

i. As much as anything, faith means we do not walk by what we see, but by what we know to be true in God: *For we walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7)*. Abram walked by faith; Lot walked only by sight.

b. **Pitched his tent even as far as Sodom:** It was only this far for now, but later Lot became a leader of this sinful city. Valuing only the things that can be seen increased his wealth temporarily, but Lot would eventually lose it all.

i. Of course Lot thought, "I can serve God as well there as here. They probably need a witness." But he deceived himself,

as many since him have done. Jeremiah 17:9 states, *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*

ii. "In the end, he who sought this world lost it, and he who was willing to give up anything for the honour of God found it." (Maclaren)

iii. It wasn't Lot's choice that led his heart astray. His heart was already astray, and it was demonstrated by his choice.

## **B. God confirms His promise to Abram.**

### **1. God promises the land to Abram and to his descendants forever.**

**(14-15) And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever."**

a. **After Lot had separated from him:** God wanted to talk to Abram alone after Lot left. This was a promise made to Abram, not to Abram's nephew.

i. This promise of the land had been made to Abram when he lived in Ur of the Chaldeans (Genesis 12:1-3, Acts 7:2-4). God now repeated the promise.

b. **All the land which you see I give to you:** God also wanted to remind Abram that even though Abram had been generous enough to grant some of the land to his nephew Lot, God still said the land belonged to Abram.

### **2. God reminds Abram of His promise to give Abram many descendants.**

**(16) "And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered."**

a. **I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth:**

This was quite a promise to make to a childless man in his seventies or eighties. Yet Abram knew to walk by faith and not by sight.

b. **Your descendants:** Again, this promise of many descendants was made to Abram when he lived in Ur of the Chaldeans (Genesis 12:1-3, Acts 7:2-4). To assure Abram, God repeated the promise.

**3. Abram walks through the land God gave to him.**

**(17-18) "Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you." Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the LORD.**

a. **Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you:** As a token of Abram's reception of the land by faith, God wants Abram to *explore* the land of promise, to walk through it as if it were his, though he did not have a record of ownership to the land yet.

i. In the same way, God wants us to *explore* a land of promise, for us – His Word – where God has *given to us exceedingly great and precious promises* (2 Peter 1:4), where He has given us *all things that pertain to life and godliness* (2 Peter 1:3). He wants us to walk through this land, possessing it by faith.

b. **Dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron:** The

name **Mamre** means, *vision*. **Hebron** means *communion*.

Abram once again walked in the LORD's vision for him and in communion with the LORD.

c. **And built an altar there to the LORD:** Abram built another altar. He lived life in constant awareness of the need for a sacrificial atonement and covering.

A question: Should we walk the land that we are responsible for? Should we go for a walk around our neighbourhoods and

see what we are responsible to spiritual administer? Interesting thought.