

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**
[Adapted from Bethel Bible-
Presbyterian Church, 10 Downing St.
Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 11

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Chapter 13-14

INTRODUCTION

Since his call to leave his country, kindred and family, to a land, which God had promised him, Abraham's faith had been put to the test. When he arrived in Canaan, the land was already inhabited by the Canaanites. Then a famine broke out in the land and he had to flee to Egypt. In Egypt, fearing for his own life because of Sarah his wife, he told a lie. When Pharaoh found out, he could have executed him, but surely, God stopped him for that would have thwarted His divine plan. Abraham returned to Canaan.

Now the events in chapters 13 and 14 showed that Abraham's faith had strengthened. His faith in the LORD had helped him to resolve a conflict with his nephew Lot. His victory against the four northern kings further increased his faith in the LORD. These two chapters showed how the LORD worked in and through Abraham to make him loyal to and completely trusting in the LORD.

Outline

- I. Abraham Returned to Bethel and a Conflict Arose Between His Herdsmen and Lot's Herdsmen (13:1-13).
 - A. Abraham left Egypt to Canaan. He was a wealthy man and journeyed to Bethel where he had earlier built an altar unto the LORD (1-4).
 - B. Abraham's herdsmen had a strife with the herdsmen of Lot, who was also very rich, because the land could not sustain both of them, and the Canaanites were dwelling in the land too (5-7).
 - C. Abraham settled the strife with Lot by giving Lot the first choice, and Lot chose the fertile valley of Jordan and pitched his tents near Sodom (8-13).
- II. The LORD Reaffirmed His Promise to Abraham (13:14-18).
 - A. God reaffirmed His promise to Abraham (14-16).
 - B. God called Abraham to claim the promise He had given to him (17).
 - C. Abraham settled in Mamre near Hebron and built an altar (18).
- III. The Kings of the East Invaded the Kings of the South (14:1-12).
 - A. Four eastern kings invaded the south to put down a rebellion by five southern kings (1-7).
 - B. The four eastern kings defeated the five southern kings, plundered their cities and Lot was taken captive (8-12).

IV. Abraham Defeated the Invaders and Saved Lot (13-16).

- A. Abraham learned of the captivity of Lot from one of the escapees (13).
- B. Abraham mustered his 318 trained men and with his allies, he pursued and defeated the invaders (14-15).
- C. Abraham brought back all the booty and also Lot and the women (16).

V. Abraham Was Met By the King of Sodom and the King of Salem (14:17-24).

- A. The king of Salem, Melchizedek met Abraham and brought provisions for the soldiers and blessed Abraham from whom he received tithes (18-20).
- B. The king of Sodom met Abraham and requested for his people but offered his goods to Abraham (17, 21).
- C. Abraham declared to the king of Sodom that he would not take anything from him, lest the king of Sodom might get the credit for Abraham's victory (22-24).

Abraham Returns

Abraham returned from Egypt with Sarah, Lot, and all his people and possessions. Contrary to general opinion, God's people can enjoy prosperity. Abraham returned to Canaan a very wealthy man. He went to the place where he first built an altar unto the LORD, that was, Bethel. There he worshipped the LORD and called upon His Name. This second visit to Bethel suggests a renewal of his trust in God's promises after his bad experience in Egypt. His relationship with God had to

be corrected. Abraham was slowly learning the way of faith.

Conflict with Lot

Once his relationship with God had been renewed, there arose strife between his herdsmen and Lot's. Abraham and Lot both grew very rich and the land was not able to support their livestock. Moreover, the Canaanites and the Perizzites had been living there, probably settled in the more fertile areas. Once again, Abraham's faith was being put to the test. The implication that the land could not sustain them seemed to threaten God's promise of the land.

How Abraham settled the dispute between him and Lot is most exemplary. Abraham behaved most selflessly and gave Lot the first choice. As Lot's uncle and the patriarch of the group, Abraham could make his choice first instead of Lot, and had the right to direct Lot where to live. But he did not and let Lot choose first. It is significant that the text recorded that Abraham's motivation for solving the strife is that there should be no strife between them "for we are brethren." Abraham treasured the common bond of their relationship. It meant something to him; enough to sacrifice the best land for his nephew Lot. It was worth saving. He cared for Lot, unlike Cain who killed his own brother. It is not proper for brethren to quarrel especially over who should inherit the land. Abraham was learning the lessons of faith in the LORD.

Lot saw that the plains of Jordan were well watered and fertile and which was near Sodom and Gomorrah, before the Lord destroyed the two cities. It was like the Garden of Eden and like the land of Egypt. In other words, he could live a life of ease, comfort and convenience. Lot was guided more by

sight, more by the outward appearance of the place. Sight can be deceiving. How Eve was similarly deceived. Little did he know that the Sodomites were wicked and sinful against the LORD. Those who walked by sight can be deceived.

The Lord's Reaffirmation

Immediately, the LORD spoke to Abraham. The LORD reassured and reiterated His promise to him. This time the LORD elaborated on His promise. The LORD invited him to claim His promise of the land—"Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (13:17). The LORD promised him "all the land" (13:15) and not part of the land. The LORD also promised that his descendants would number as many as the dust of the earth (a hyperbolic expression). Abraham now had to walk in faith believing that wherever he walked, that piece of real estate would be his and his descendants'. In other words what Abraham needed to do was to claim and enjoy the gift God promised him by walking in faith! God so deals with Christians in the New Testament, for we already have been blessed with spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:13). It behoves us to walk in faith and claim the gift of God. Abraham responded by removing his tent and settled in the plain of Mamre, which was in Hebron. There he built another altar unto the LORD. His faith in the LORD was improving. He worshipped the LORD. It was appropriate and it intimates his claim of the area as the LORD's gift for him and his posterity.

Northern Invasion

Another test of his faith. The kings of the south had been subjected to the

kings of the north. The southern kings had been paying tribute to their masters in the north. But after paying for twelve years, the five kings of the south rebelled and stopped paying. Now the kings of the north invaded the south. The northern kings were victorious and even the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were defeated. The victors plundered the cities and they took Lot captive. The Promised Land was being threatened by this sudden invasion from the north. An escapee reported to Abraham that Lot was taken captive. The text states that now Lot dwelt *in* Sodom. Evidently, Lot had shifted from living *near* Sodom to living *in* Sodom. This could suggest that if Lot had not moved into Sodom, he might not have been captured and involved Abraham in the war.¹ But the wrath of man brings about praise to the LORD God Almighty.

However, Abraham's response was once again magnanimous. He could have let the situation as it was and served Lot right for choosing to separate from him. But he did no such thing. Instead he mustered his trained men, three hundred and eighteen of them, and together with his three allies, Aner, Eschol and Mamre, he pursued the invaders, defeated them and rescued Lot. Abraham used all the resources he had and all the help, which was available. Trusting and believing in God's promises does not negate a believer's duty and responsibility of playing his part. Abraham moved out in

¹ Notice that the Abraham was called "the Hebrew." This is the first time "Hebrew" is used here. Its meaning is "the one from beyond." It smacks of a derogatory term describing one who is does not belong to the place or country. He is an outsider and unwelcome. The name "Hebrew" stuck, for Joseph was called a Hebrew (39:14) and by that time the name became to be used to refer to the descendants of Abraham as an ethnic group, the Hebrews.

faith for God had promised, God would keep His promise, and what he needed to do was to be courageous and to act on that basis in faith.

Melchizedek Met Abraham

The appearance of Melchizedek is unannounced. He is suddenly introduced as the king of Salem. His name is a compound of two words, meaning, “king” and “righteousness,” hence the king of righteousness. And Salem was the ancient name of Jerusalem.² The name means “peace.” Linking these two ideas, “righteousness” and “peace,” there can only be peace when there is righteousness.³ He is described here as the priest of Most High God. In the book of Hebrews Melchizedek is pictured as foreshadowing the Lord Jesus Christ as King and Priest of the Most High God.⁴

Melchizedek came out to meet Abraham and offered him “bread and wine.” The giving of refreshment was for the tired soldiers and to celebrate their victory. And he blessed Abraham in the name of the Most High God and ascribed Abraham’s victory to the Most High God, the Creator of heaven and earth (14:20). The fact that Abraham gave him tithes of all the goods, after Melchizedek blessed him, shows that he had found another brother who believed in the same God as he and his blessings surely had inspired and encouraged him with regard to the

promises of God to him. God’s promises to Abraham would be fulfilled.

King of Sodom Met Abraham

The King of Sodom came out to meet Abraham. The King of Sodom was of a different character than Melchizedek. He told Abraham to return his people to him but he could take the goods for himself (14:21). He had the audacity to make this deal with Abraham who had defeated the enemies and brought back his people and goods. He should be at the mercy of Abraham. Instead he initiated a bargain. Once again Abraham’s true and good character emerged. Abraham had already made up his mind to return the people together with their goods to the king of Sodom. Abraham clearly and categorically told the king of Sodom that he only looked up to the Most High God, the Creator of heaven and earth, for all needs and provisions (14:22). And he would not take as much as a shoe lace from him, meaning nothing, so that the king of Sodom could not boast that he had made Abraham rich. This attitude and action of Abraham demonstrated his loyalty to the LORD and his complete trust in the ability of the LORD to provide for all his needs. While he allowed the others and his allies to take their share of the reward, he himself refused the reward. Abraham’s faith has come full circle. Each time the promises of God were threatened, he had fared well and his faith was strengthened.

It is important that we learn how God tested and trained Abraham in strengthening his faith so that he completely trusted Him.

² KJV Psalm 76:2 In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion. Zion is another name for Jerusalem.

³ Joyce G. Baldwin, The Message of Genesis: 12-50, p.47.

⁴ KJV Hebrews 6:20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

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**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Genesis 13:1-7; 3 John 1:1-8; 1 Timothy 6:6-11.

TUESDAY: Genesis 13:8-18; Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.

WEDNESDAY: Genesis 14:1-12; James 1:13-15; Romans 8:9-18.

THURSDAY : Genesis 14:13-16; Romans 8:28-39; 1 John 5:4.

FRIDAY: Genesis 14:17-24; Malachi 3:10-12; 2 Corinthians 9:8-15.

Discussion Questions

1. Who were the two rich men mentioned in today's reading?

2. Is it wrong to be rich? If the answer is "No," why?

3. In what way is getting rich wrong?

4. How did Abraham solve the strife between his herdsmen and Lot's?

5. What wrong principle did Lot adopt in choosing the land to live in?

6. What renewed and expanded promises did the Lord give to Abraham?

7. Why do you think the Lord chooses this moment to speak to him?

8. In what way(s) is the political and military situation described in this passage similar to those of today?

9. Where did Lot pitch his tents when he chose the land, where was he living now?

10. How would you explain his shift?

11. Abraham and his people were no military men, how do you explain his victory over the four northern kings?

12. What exemplary attitude and action did Abraham show?

13. How does Melchizedek put Abraham's victory in the correct perspective?

14. How did Abraham show his appreciation?

15. In what practical ways can Abraham's growing faith in the LORD encourage us to depend on God's faithfulness?
