

Genesis – Lesson 12

Abram and Lot Separate

Read Genesis 13:1-13

1. (a) What do you learn about *Abram* in v. 2 and about *Lot* in vv. 5-6? *Why* is this significant?

Both of these men were *wealthy*; they possessed much in the way of livestock and monetary wealth (silver and gold). They had accumulated for themselves great personal wealth while in Ur and had brought this with them to Canaan, as well as what had been accumulated in Egypt. The Lord had been generous to them, through his *common grace*, and now this wealth had become a stress-point between them: their flocks and herdsmen were struggling to keep both sets of animals in the same place, and it was causing trouble. Ultimately, it forced Abram and Lot to separate. The significance of this is that Abram (and Lot) both left their comfortable, prosperous lives in Ur and Haran to come to Canaan, and their prosperity was now causing them some grief. The story from this point (between Abram and Lot) will revolve around this separation.

(b) What does it mean in v. 4 that Abram “called upon the name of the Lord?” How might it relate to the incident in *Egypt*?

To call upon the name of the Lord is to humble yourself before God and recognize his sovereign authority over you. Abram bowed down before God, probably to confess his sin in leaving Canaan and going into Egypt, submitting himself again to the Lord and seeking forgiveness and restoration. Abram desired for God to keep the promises that he had made, and Abram knew that confession and restoration would be necessary in order for God to continue to bless him.

(c) What does v. 1 *imply* about Lot as Abram went into Egypt and then returned to Canaan?

It would appear that Lot went with Abram and Sarai into Egypt when they fled the famine in Canaan. This would make logical sense, as Lot was (somewhat) dependent upon Abram for his support and protection. It would also be logical that Lot prospered in Egypt as Abram had, given their close proximity, an issue that now arises between them.

2. (a) According to v. 7, *who* is occupying the land at this point? How does this help explain the “*strife*” that is occurring between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot?

The land of Canaan was *not* unoccupied; the native peoples (the Canaanites) and other peoples (the Perizzites) were living here at the time. Abram and Lot did not come to a place where there was wide-open stretches of unoccupied land that they could use; they came to a place that was already in use. Probably, the additional flocks brought by Abram and Lot were in *direct* conflict with the native peoples, and this only *added* to the pressure between their herdsmen. Land was hard to come by, especially in the hill country (see 2c below) in the central part of the territory. The competition with the natives, then, forced Abram and Lot to find alternative resources.

(b) Why did Abram have the right to make the *first choice* when it came to choosing grazing land (see vv. 8-9)? Why do you think he allowed *Lot* to make the first choice?

Abram was the *patriarch* of the family, and as the older man, he had the first right to choose where to go. Additionally, it was *Abram* who had been led there by God, and was the rightful heir to the promises of God in regards to where they were now living. So, Abram had the right to choose first, but he granted this privilege to Lot. Abram may have known the kind of man that Lot was, and knew that he would have a tendency to move down into the Jordan Valley. Lot appears to be quite *selfish* (a point which will appear more and more true as this story unfolds), and Abram may have known this about him. Giving Lot the first choice would tempt him to move away from this place, where Abram could then stay within the territory God had commanded for him.

(c) Where did *Lot* choose to settle? Where did *Abram* go? Using a map of the territory, explain the difference between the *topography* of these two locations.

Lot chose to move his flocks down into the Jordan Valley, towards the Dead Sea (which was not yet dead according to v. 10). This was an *arid* location, well-watered by the Jordan, especially at the southern end near Sodom and Gomorrah. Abram stayed in the central part of the country, to the west of the Jordan. This area was known as the hill country, a rocky, mountainous area used for terrace farming and grazing. The Jordan Valley was lush and green before becoming desert to the east. So, Lot chose the *better* territory, an area that was far superior for grazing livestock (see 2d below), and Abram remained in the area which was more difficult for such things.

(d) What was the *basis* for Lot's choice? Why was his choice *wrong* (see v. 13)?

Lot chose on the basis of *convenience* and *potential*, especially when it came to his own prosperity. He selfishly chose an area that was more lush and fruitful, believing that he would live better there. But, he chose poorly for several reasons: 1) he moved far away from Abram and the protection of being with family, 2) he chose *solely* for selfish reasons, rather than deferring to Abram his elder, and 3) he chose a place that was known for its wickedness (v. 13), and he purposely put himself near to such a place.

(e) Skim Genesis 14 and 19. What *eventual* effect did Lot's choice have on him and his family?

Lot would be caught up in the dangers of living away from Abram (from marauders and other thugs; Genesis 14) and would be drawn into the sinful habits of the people of Sodom (Genesis 19). Both of these would put his life at risk, and in both cases, he would need to be rescued. He would have to give up his integrity in Sodom, and he would (ultimately) lose his wife to the destruction that befell those places. If he had chosen to stay close to Abram, none of that would have occurred.

3. Compare these verses to 1 Corinthians 6:1-8. How does Abram's example before his nephew relate to how we ought to treat other believers in the church?

Paul's point in these verses is the *visible effect* of selfishness upon the message of the gospel. When Christian brothers and sisters attempt to defend their personal "rights" over against other believers, they wind up hurting the cause of Christ. It is better to be "wronged" or "defrauded" by another, Paul says, then to publicly attempt to find secular restoration. Such things should be handled "in-house" (i.e. in the privacy of the church) in order to maintain a testimony in the public square that brings honor to Christ. This is a testimony that Abram held before his nephew: instead of demanding his rights as the patriarch and choosing the best land for himself, Abram chose to allow Lot to take away what he himself could have enjoyed. He allowed himself to be "wronged" by Lot, knowing that God would best be served by him remaining here in the "less valuable" land. The result was much misery for Lot, but Abram was able to maintain his relationship with the Lord in the place he was called to be.

Read Genesis 13:14-18

4. (a) What *additional* promise did God make to Abram once he settled in Hebron? How was this promise *fulfilled*? Why did it take great *faith* to believe it?

God now promised to Abram that his descendants would be as numerous as dust, occupying this land for as far as he could see. Obviously, this was fulfilled through the generations of people that came from him, specifically, the people of Israel who would occupy this land. But, it took great faith for Abram to believe this since he was advanced in age and Sarai was barren. Without children, it was hard for Abram to believe that such a thing was possible, which was why it took great faith for Abram to take God at his word.

(b) What did God instruct Abram to *do* at this point (v. 17)? *Why* would God make him do it?

God instructed Abram to *walk* the land, to scout out the entirety of the land to see for himself what it looked like. God made Abram do this 1) as a test of his faith (i.e. would he do it as though it was promised to him) and 2) as a means of showing the *literalness* of this promise. By walking through the land, Abram could touch and see the promise of God and, as he walked, he would be assured *by faith* that all of this would eventually belong to his heirs.

5. From any New Testament passage, list your favorite *promise* of God and explain why it is so important to you. How is this promise related to the *gospel* of Jesus?

For me, Romans 8:28-30: the promise that God works *all things* together for the good of those who are called by him according to his purpose, the promise that everything in my life is ordained by God as part of the *goal* he has in mind for me. This is a *stark* reminder to me that nothing that befalls me is by accident, but has a specific purpose in the grand plan of God for me. In many ways, this promise is similar to the one made to Abram: as he would struggle through many difficulties, all of them were part of God's plan to bring about great things through him. The same is true for me: as I struggle through the various problems God ordains, all of them are designed to conform me more and more to the image of Christ as he ultimately brings me to glorification.