

Genesis Chapter 13

Verses 1-4: Significantly, after the disastrous situation in Egypt, Abram journeyed back to where he had erected an altar and there he again worshiped (see 12:8).

Genesis 13:1 "And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south."

“And Abram went up out of Egypt, he and his wife”: A special mercy that either of them returned, considering the sin they had committed and the peril in which they had been placed.

“And all that he had”: Referring principally to the souls acquired in Haran (Genesis 12:5, 16), his material wealth being mentioned afterwards.

“And Lot with him”: Lot accompanied him into Egypt, because he comes with him out of it. (Lot who does not appear in the preceding paragraph, no part of which relates to him, but is now reintroduced into the narrative, the present portion of the story being connected with his fortunes) with him into the south.

“Into the south”: is so called in respect, not to Egypt, but to the land of promise. It acquired this title before the times of the patriarch, among the Hebrew-speaking tribes inhabiting it. The great riches of Abram consist of cattle and precious metals. The cattle are the chief form of wealth in the East.

Abram's flocks are mentioned in preparation for the following occurrence. He advances north to the place between Beth-el and Ai, and perhaps still further, according to (Genesis 13:4), to the place of Sichem, where he built the first altar in the land.

Last lesson, we learned that Pharaoh had sent Abram out of Egypt, when he discovered that God had plagued him because of Sarai, Abram's wife. We notice, here, that Abram left nothing behind but took even the gifts that Pharaoh had given him.

Genesis 13:2 "And Abram [was] very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold."

“And Abram was very rich”: He was rich in spiritual things, in faith, and in all other graces, and was an heir of the kingdom of heaven. Also in temporal things, as it sometimes is the lot of good men to be, though but rarely, at least to be exceeding rich, as Abram was. Or "very heavy" as the word signifies, he was loaded with wealth and riches.

Abram's riches lay in cattle, in silver, and in gold. Cattle are mentioned first, as being the principal part of the riches of men in those days, such as sheep and oxen, he and she asses and camels (see Genesis 12:16). Besides these he had great quantities of silver and gold.

The Jews say he coined money in his own name, and that his coin had on one side an old man and an old woman, and on the other side a young man and a young woman. His riches no doubt

was greatly increased by the gifts and presents he received from the king of Egypt during his stay there.

I really believe that cattle were symbolic for all food. It is interesting that God did not include land, or jewels as wealth. God's people, many times, are wealthy. It is not the riches that are sin. It is the love of riches.

Genesis 13:3 "And he went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai;"

Abram advances north to the place between Beth-el and Hai, and perhaps still further, according to (Genesis 13:4), to the place of Sichem, where he built the first altar in the land.

The sense of acceptance with God, which he had before experienced in these places of meeting with God, he has now recovered. The spirit of adoption, therefore, speaks within him.

Genesis 13:4 "Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD."

"Called on the name of the Lord": (12:8). The process of contrition in a new heart has come to its right issue in confession and supplication.

In this, I believe Abram saw that he had sinned, and went back to find God, to get forgiveness, and begin again. That is where so many people fail. When a Christian realizes he has sinned, he should repent, and go back to his first love of God, and begin again.

Genesis 13:5-6 "And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents." "And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together."

Not unexpectedly, conflict occurred because of crowded conditions and limited grazing space. Both uncle and nephew had accrued much on the slow trip from Ur via Haran and Egypt to the Beth-el/Ai region.

"Flocks and herds": Wealth in the ancient world was measured, not by land owned, but by the size of one's herds and the possession of silver, gold and jewels (verse 2; Job 1:1-3).

When a man has great wealth, as Abram did, his family as well usually has wealth. Abram loved Lot as a son (which he did not have), and probably helped Lot get these things to help him get started.

Lot was now grown. It was time for him to go out on his own. He had acquired great wealth along with Abram. They had so many animals; there was not enough grazing for them all.

Genesis 13:7 And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

“Perizzite”: A Canaanite tribe (34:30; Deut. 7:1; Judges 1:4; 3:5-6; 1 Kings 9:20-21; Ezra 9:1).

It was safer to dwell together, in case someone attacked them, but the land was not able to sustain both large herds, and their servants were fighting over the best grazing spots. So many times, large groups of people cannot dwell together without strife. It is even difficult for two families to live in the same house without fighting, and these were large groups of people.

Genesis 13:8 "And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we [be] brethren."

“We be brethren”: Abram’s whole reaction in resolving the strife between the two households and their personnel portrayed a different Abram than that seen in Egypt; one whose attitude was not self-centered. Waving his right to seniority, he gave the choice to his nephew, Lot.

Abram did not want to fight with Lot. So many times, when a young man becomes of age, there is strife in the home. Both the father and his son, who is of age, want to be the authority. Neither wants to be under the other, and conflict arises. The only way to solve the problem is for this adult son to move out and establish his own home. Such was the case of Abram and Lot.

Genesis 13:9 "[Is] not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if [thou wilt take] the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if [thou depart] to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

“Is not the whole land before thee”: Abram gladly called on Lot to select for himself (verses 10-11), what he desired for his household and flocks. After Lot’s choice had been exercised, then Abram would accept what was left from him. Perhaps this did much to restore, in the eyes of the servants, Abram’s integrity and reputation (see note on 12:20).

The material wealth occasioned a shortage of available grazing land and caused strife between Lot’s shepherds and Abram’s. Abram condescended to the younger man, Lot, and gave him the first choice of all the land.

Abram was telling Lot to choose first, and he would take the land Lot did not want.

Genesis 13:10 "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."

“Before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah”: When Moses was writing (700 years after Abram came to Canaan), the devastation of that region had long before occurred by divinely initiated catastrophe (19:23-29), totally obliterating any evidence of its agricultural richness.

“As the garden of the Lord, like ... Egypt”: This 2-fold appraisal of the Jordan Valley, with its meadows on either side of the river to which Lot was so strongly attracted, highlighted its lush and fertile nature. Moses, reading this to the Jews about to enter Canaan and likening it to the Garden of Eden, referred hearer and reader to God’s revelatory description of it (Gen. 2:8-15).

Liking it to an obviously well-known and well irrigated region of Egypt referred them to a place the Jews had likely known well in their sojourn in Egypt.

“Zoar”: 4:2. A town located at the South end of the Dead Sea, whose name means “small place” (see 19:22).

“Sodom” is identified in Scripture with Gomorrah and the cities of the plain (13:10-14:12). Sodom was known for its moral wickedness. The ancient site has not yet been clearly identified but is thought to be possibly submerged under the waters of the Dead Sea south of the El-Lisan peninsula, in what was originally the vale of Siddim (14:3).

Jebel Usdum (“Mount of Sodom”), a salt mountain at the southwestern end of the Dead Sea, seems to preserve the ancient name. Excavations at nearby Bab edh-Dhra were begun by William F. Albright in 1924, and were completed by Paul Lapp for the American Schools of Oriental Research (1965-1967).

They revealed an enormous cemetery with over 20,000 tombs and several hundred thousand burials. Evidence of an extensive population in this area totally ceased after the twenty-first century B.C. (about the time of Abraham). Historical references to Sodom have been cited among the clay tablets from Ebla found at Tell Mardikh in Syria.

There can be no doubt that a flourishing civilization once existed in the area and came to an abrupt halt at the end of the Middle Bronze Age.

Verses 11-12: An excellent yet selfish choice, from a worldly point of view, but disastrous spiritually because it drew him into the wickedness of Sodom (verse 13).

Genesis 13:11 "Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other."

Then Lot chose him all the plain: A little civility or good breeding is of great importance in the concerns of life. Lot either had none, or did not profit by it. He certainly should have left the choice to the patriarch, and should have been guided by his counsel. But he took his own way, trusting to his own judgment, and guided only by the sight of his eyes.

Lot accepts the offer of his noble-hearted kinsman. He cannot do otherwise, as he is the companion, while his uncle is the principal. He willingly concedes to Abram his present position, and, after a lingering attendance on his kinsman, retires to take the ground of self-dependence. Outward and earthly motives prevail with him in the selection of his new abode.

He beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered, etc.; so, he chose the land, without considering the character of the inhabitants, or what advantages or disadvantages it might afford him in spiritual things. This choice, as we shall see in the sequel, had nearly proved the ruin of his body, soul, and family.

He is charmed by the well-watered lowlands bordering on the Jordan and its effluents. He is here less liable to a periodical famine, and he roams with his serfs and herds in the direction of Sodom. This town and Amorah (Gomorrah), were still flourishing at the time of Lot's arrival. The country in which they stood was of extraordinary beauty and fertility.

Lot chose what he thought was the best for himself. This land had plenty of water and was very fertile land. Lot was looking at the physical, and not the spiritual. He had not taken into consideration the evil lifestyle of the people. Abram was satisfied with the land Lot did not choose. Abram's unselfishness would be rewarded.

Genesis 13:12 "Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched [his] tent toward Sodom."

Lot dwelled "in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom": Later he dwelt there (14:12), and subsequently served on the town council (19:1).

Genesis 13:13 "But the men of Sodom [were] wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly."

"The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners": Lot's decisions put him in dangerous proximity to those cities whose names would become a byword for perversion and unbridled wickedness. Their evil is the theme of chapter 19.

Whether Lot knew that the men of Sodom were evil or not at this time, was not mentioned in the Bible. Lot should have checked this out before moving in with them. Notice the Scripture above, it was not enough to just say they were wicked and sinners. God considers homosexuality a terrible sin (exceedingly).

Verses 14-17: With Lot gone, the Lord reaffirmed His covenant promise with Abram (Genesis 12:1-3). Strikingly and unmistakably, the Lord deeded the Land (verse 14, look in all directions; and verse 17, walk in all directions), in perpetuity to Abram and his descendants. Whom He declared would be innumerable (verse 16), as the dust.

Genesis 13:14 "And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:"

"And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him": indicates that God gives the best to those who leave the choice to Him, for He reaffirmed His promise to give the land of Canaan to Abram and his "seed" [descendants]" "forever" (verse 15).

Genesis 13:15 "For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever."

“To thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever”: This land was given to Abram, that it might be given legally by an unbroken line of descent to his posterity. And though Abram himself cannot be said to have possessed it (Acts 7:5), yet it was the gift of God to him in behalf of his seed.

This was always the design of God, not that Abram himself should possess it, but that his posterity should, till the manifestation of Christ in the flesh.

God showed Abram the Promised Land, which his descendants will receive as part of God's promise to Abram. This was not for Lot's descendants, only Abram's.

Genesis 13:16 "And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, [then] shall thy seed also be numbered."

God announces that He will make his seed "as the dust of the earth." This multitude of seed, even when we take the ordinary sense which the form of expression bears in popular use, far transcends the productive powers of the Promised Land in its utmost extent.

Yet to Abram, who was accustomed to the petty tribes that then roved over the pastures of Mesopotamia and Palestine, this disproportion would not be apparent.

A people who should fill the land of Canaan, would seem to him innumerable. But we see that the promise begins already to enlarge itself beyond the bounds of the natural seed of Abram. He is again enjoined to walk over his inheritance, and contemplate it in all its length and breadth, with the reiterated assurance that it will be his.

Here again, God told Abram (even though he was very old), I will make so many descendants of you, that they will be impossible to number. God felt He needed to reassure Abram that he would have children and grandchildren. Abram, by this time thought, that the only descendants he would have would be through his nephew Lot.

Genesis 13:17 "Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee."

God set the boundaries of Israel right there that day. The Israelites still claim this territory today.

Genesis 13:18 "Then Abram removed [his] tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which [is] in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD."

“The plain of Mamre”: A distinctively large grove of trees owned by Mamre the Amorite (14:13), located 19 miles southwest of Jerusalem at Hebron whose elevation exceeds 3,000 feet.

“Built there an altar”: 12:7-8; 13:4. Again it is noted he “built there an altar unto the Lord.” He was devoted to the worship of God.

Wherever Abram was, he built an altar. Hebron is an area still with the same name. "Hebron" means community and alliance.

Genesis Chapter 13 Questions

1. What three things did God classify as wealth?
2. What two things that we classify as wealth, does God not count as wealth?
3. What pertaining to wealth is sin?
4. We read that Beth-el is the place of what?
5. Why do you think Abram went back to Beth-el?
6. What should Christians do when they discover they have sinned?
7. What three things did Lot have with Him?
8. Where do you suppose Lot acquired them?
9. Why was the land unable to sustain them?
10. Who was the strife between?
11. What makes us realize that Abram was a peacemaker?
12. What plan did Abram offer Lot?
13. What area did Lot choose?
14. Why?
15. What town was Lot's tent near?
16. How should Lot have judged which area he should take?
17. What was the sin in this area?
18. What area did this land compare with physically?
19. How long did God promise to give the Promised Land to Abram?
20. How many descendants would Abram have?
21. Why had Abram just about given up having natural children?
22. Where did Abram come to in this land?
23. What was the first thing Abram did here?
24. What does Hebron mean?