

The Book of Genesis

Lesson Number 21



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot m(1992); ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), **AMPLIFIED** =Amplified Bible (1965), **ABP**=Apostolic Bible Polygot with Greek Interlinear (2003); **ASV**=American Standard Version (1901), **BBE**=Bible in Basic English (1949), **CEV**=Contemporary English Version (1995); **DRA**=Douay-Rheims (1899), **ERV** =English Revised Version (1885), **ESV**=English Stand Version (2001), **GENEVA**=Geneva Bible (1599), **GNB**=Good News (1966), **GWN**=God's Word (1995), **IE**= International English (1973), **ISV**=International Standard Version (1967), **JPS**=Jewish Publication Society (1917), **KJV**=King James Version (1611), **LITV**= Literal Translation of the Bible (1976), **LIVING**=Living Bible (1971), **MESSAGE**=The Message (1993), **MKJV**= Modern KJV (1962), **MONTGOMERY**=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), **MRD**=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), **NAB**=New American Bible (2002), **NASB**=New American Standard Bible (1977), **NAU**=New American Standard Bible (1995), **NIB**=New International Bible, **NIV**=New International Version (1984), **NJB**=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), **NKJV**=New King James Version (1979), **NLT**=New Living Translation (1996), **NRSV**=New Revised Standard Version (1989), **PHILLIPS**=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), **PNT**=Bishop's New Testament (1595), **RSV**=Revised Standard Version (1952), **TNK**=JPS Tanakj (1985), **WEB**=Webster Bible (1833), **WEYMOUTH**=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), **WILLIAMS**=William's New Testament (1937), **TYNDALE**=Tyndale's Bible (1526), **WYCLIFFE**=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), **YLT** =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- GREEK LEXICON LEGEND -----

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, **UBS** = UBS Lexicon, **LOUW-NIDA** = Louw-Nida Lexicon, **LIDDELL SCOTT** = Liddell Scott Lexicon, **THAYER** = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, **LEH** = LEH Lexicon, **GINGRICH** = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS: THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, MANKIND, SIN, THE FIRST CHOSEN AND BLESSED NATION, THE FIRST CURSE, THE FIRST PROMISE, AND THE FIRST FAITH.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

ABRAHAM AND LOT

Gen 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. ² And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. ³ And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; 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. ⁵ And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. ⁶ 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. ¹¹ Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. ¹² Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.." (Genesis 13:1-12)

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

Abram and Lot left Egypt together, and Abram headed immediately for Canaan – in particular the south, what

would be Judah in the future. Abram went to the place where his tent had been pitched in the beginning – when he first arrived in Canaan. There he called upon

the name of the Lord as he did before. Because of the abundance of their flocks, Abram and Lot found the place where they were dwelling could not sustain both

Having left Egypt as a very wealthy man, Abram makes his way to an altar, and afterwards faces a challenge – Given O. Blakely

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of them. This was discovered when their herdsmen began to strive with each other. Knowing that this was not good, Abraham told Lot to pick out the portion of the land he preferred, saying he would select the other part. Lot chose the well-watered plain of Jordan which, at that time, was similar to the Garden of the Lord. Abraham dwelt in the land of Canaan, while Lot chose to dwell in the cities of the plain. Thus the stage is set for some remarkable works of the Lord that will prove to be points of instruction throughout history. Even the day of judgment will be effected.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE RECORD OF ABRAHAM'S LIFE IS GIVEN

It is important that we note the manner in which the life of Abraham is made known. Thus far, the following events have been recorded.

- ➔ The general time when he was begotten by Terah (Gen 11:26).
- ➔ When he took Sarai to be his wife

(Gen 11:29).

- ➔ When he commenced the journey to Canaan with his father, wife, and Lot his nephew (Gen 11:31).
- ➔ When God first appeared to him, telling him to get out of his country, his father's house, and his kindred, and go to a land that He would show him (Gen 12:1-3).
- ➔ The time that he left Haran, commencing the second leg of his journey (Gen 12:4).
- ➔ The time the Lord appeared to him in Canaan, promising to give him the land. At this time, Abraham built an altar unto the Lord (Gen 12:7).
- ➔ The time he arrived in Bethel and built a second altar, calling upon the name of the Lord (Gen 12:3).
- ➔ The time of the famine in Canaan, and his temporary migration to Egypt (Gen 12:10).
- ➔ The incident with Pharaoh and Sarai (Gen 12:11-20).
- ➔ When, with Sarai and Lot, he left Egypt and returned to Canaan (12:20).

Ten events taking place over a

Abraham at four key intervals of his life.

- ➔ 75 when departed Haran (Gen 12:4).
- ➔ 86 when Ishmael born (Gen 16:16).
- ➔ 99 when name changed to Abraham, and Sarai's name to Sarah. At this time it was confirmed that Isaac would be born the next year (Gen 17:1-21)
- ➔ 100 when Isaac born (Gen 21:5).

NOT THE MANNER OF HUMAN BIOGRAPHIES

First, this is not the manner in which men would write of the life of a person. All of these above events occurred during a period of twenty-five years.

None of the events relate to Abraham as a mere man. All of them have to do with his involvement in the purpose of God – being called of God, and journeying to the land promised to him.

For Abraham, and by means of his faith, he had some awareness of these associations, and therefore shaped his life around the commission and promise of the Lord. In this, he is a noble example for us all.

We are blessed to be living in a time when considerable has been said about Divine direction and purpose – infinitely more than was known to Abraham.

period of more than seventy-five years.

REVELATIONS ABOUT ABRAHAM'S AGE

The Spirit reveals the age of

The Application to Us

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Abraham. Here are a few of those considerations, none of which, so far as the record is concerned, had been revealed to the patriarch Abraham.

- ➡ God keeps the feet of His saints (1 Sam 2:9).
- ➡ The steps of a good man are directed by the Lord (Psa 37:23).
- ➡ God turns the heart of kings (Prov 21:1).

be tempted above their ability (1 Cor 10:13).

- ➡ God not only begins the good work, but brings it to its completion (Phil 1:6)
- ➡ God's people are kept by the power of God through faith (1 Pet 1:5).
- ➡ The Lord keeps His people from falling (Jude 1:24).

This is the nature of spiritual life, and it is lived out in the person of Abraham. As we progress through his life, we will behold his faith growing, and his reasoning becoming more strong. All of this takes place even though he, by way of comparison, had received a comparatively small amount of revelation.

Consider the life of the patriarch in view of what had **not** been revealed to him.

- ➡ A Messiah who would take away sin.
- ➡ The fact of reconciliation to God.
- ➡ The promise of eternal life.
- ➡ God's eternal purpose.
- ➡ The reality of sanctification.
- ➡ That God has a household.
- ➡ That the world is going to be destroyed by fire.
- ➡ The day of judgment.
- ➡ The work of changing people from glory to glory by the Holy Spirit.
- ➡ The hope of glory.
- ➡ The imputation of righteousness.

Marvelous realities like these had not been revealed prior to Abraham, nor during his lifetime. Yet, his faith operated as though they were fully known by him. That is the nature of faith. That is how a person reacts to whom it has been given to believe.

- ➡ The angels are charged with keeping the saints (Psa 91:11; Heb 1:13-14).
- ➡ No adversary can pluck God's people out of His hand, or succeed in separating them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (John 10:28-29; Rom 8:35-39).
- ➡ God works all things together for good to those who love Him and are the called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28).
- ➡ God will finish His work, and cut it short in righteousness (Rom 9:28).
- ➡ The gifts and calling of God are without repentance (Rom 11:29).
- ➡ God makes His people stand (Rom 14:4).
- ➡ God is faithful (1 Cor 1:9; 10:13).
- ➡ God does not allow His people to

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Spiritual Infancy

While spiritual infancy is a phase of life that must yield to godly maturity, it is not a time during which blunders and failings must dominate. If we doubt this, we must consider the steadfastness of Abraham. **The difficulties with spiritual immaturity are found in its continuance beyond a reasonable period of time** (Heb 5:12). There is a period associated with beginnings during which God causes a person to stand (Rom 14:4), protecting them from the jeopardies of being "children" in understanding. However, this protection postulates growth and development in the faith. If that growth does not occur, a fall is inevitable (Gen 6:4-6).

A Conclusion

The life of Abraham is a confirmation to us that faith will stand the test of trial, the length of time, and the call to obedience. Our review of the life of this saint of God must be attended by an acute awareness of these circumstances.

It is time to confront the illogical nature of perpetual infancy and spiritual ignorance. **The continued existence of these conditions are a glaring contradiction of both the reality and nature of salvation.** A salvation that does not really save is not valid.

ABRAM AND LOT LEAVE EGYPT

Gen 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.”***

Our attention is now turned from Pharaoh to Abram. The previous chapter ends with these words: ***“and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had”*** (Gen 12:20). This, however, was only according to appearance. The reality of the case is that Abram left willingly, of his own accord. **He knew what time it was!**

WENT UP OUT OF EGYPT

“And Abram went up out of Egypt . . .” Other versions read, “up from Egypt,” NKJV “left Egypt,” GWN “from Egypt returned,” NJB “returned Egypt,” WEB “left Egypt and traveled north,” LIVING “went north out of Egypt,” GNB and “left Egypt and went back.” MESSAGE

Having spent sufficient time in Egypt to outlast the famine in Canaan, Abram returns to the land to which God had directed him. He returns with his wife and possessions, and Lot with his family and possessions. **Further, they were better off than they were when they were forced to sojourn in Egypt.** Although they were strangers in Egypt, they were protected by the favor of Pharaoh during their tenure in the land. God had directed their steps, given them favor with men, and caused them to abound.

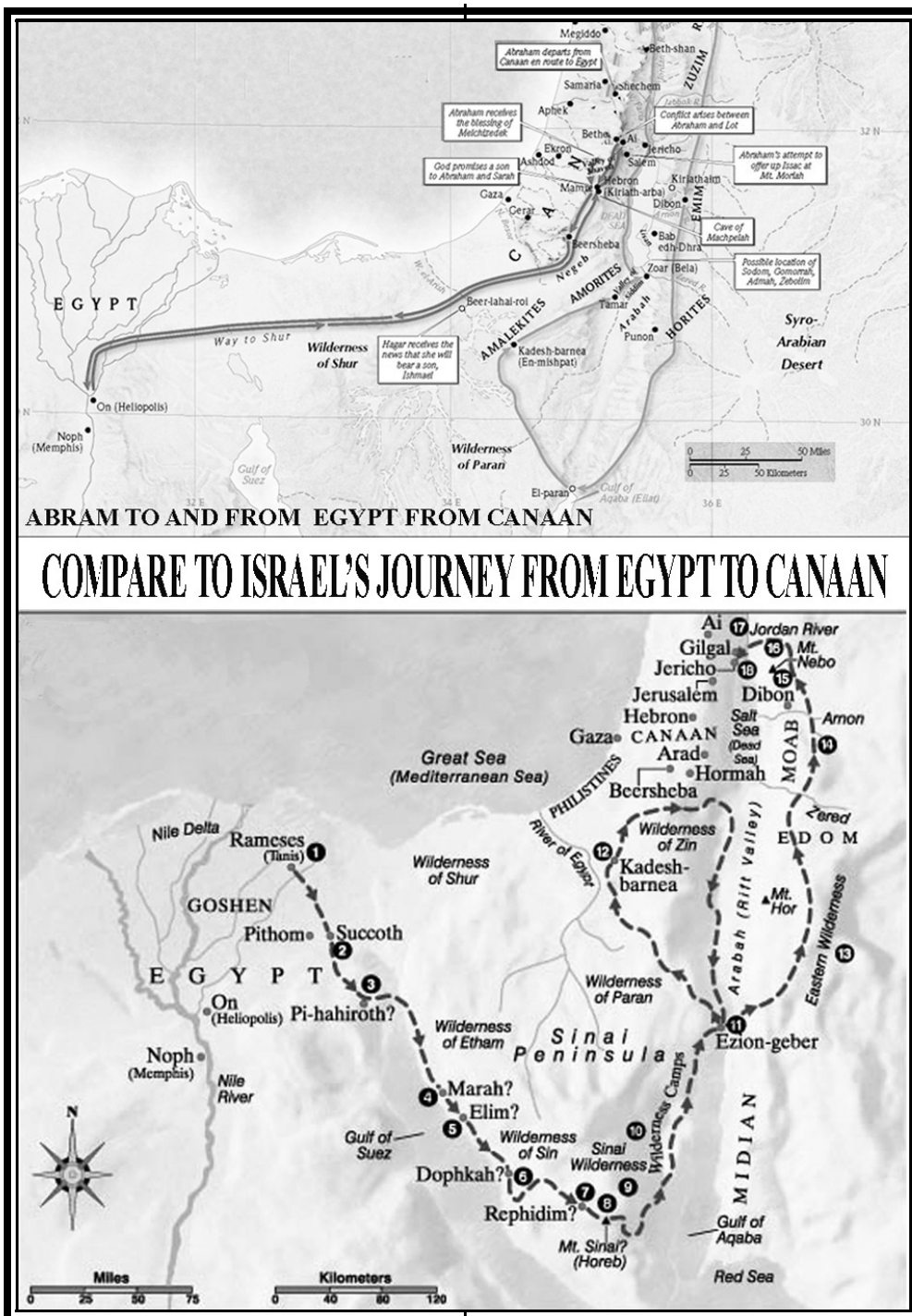
AND ALL THAT HE HAD

“ . . . he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him . . .”

About five hundred years later, when Israel came out of Egypt, they did not leave ***“an hoof behind”*** (Ex 10:26). Now, when Abram comes out of Egypt. Nothing that he owned was left behind. **This was a confirmation that his removal from Egypt was of the Lord.**

A Type of Spiritual Life

Our pilgrimage to glory is characterized by moves from one place



to another – from the lower to the higher. **One of the ways we know that our move has been the result of the Lord's direction is when we are able to keep the legitimate goods we came to possess while we were in the lowlands.** There are, for example, some valid perceptions that we gained when we

were in Babylon. They did not come from Babylon itself, but were given to us by the Lord – similar to the words He delivered to Daniel when he was in Babylon. When we made our exodus from that stunted environment, we were able to take all of truth we had grasped with us. In fact, the things we

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were given to see from time to time caused friction in the environment in which we found ourselves.

INTO THE SOUTH

“ . . . into the south.” Other versions read, “to the south,” ^{NKJB} “to the Negev,” ^{NASB} “to the Negeb,” ^{NRSV} “towards the south,” ^{DARBY} “went to the Negev,” ^{GWN} “into the wilderness,” ^{SEPTUAGINT} “into the south,” ^{RWB} “traveled north into the Negev,” ^{LIVING} and “into the South [country of Judah, the Negeb].” ^{AMPLIFIED}

The “south” refers to the southern part of Canaan, and “Negev” is a transliteration of the Hebrew word translated “south” – נֶגֶב {neh'-gheb} **MEANING:** 1) SOUTH-COUNTRY, NEKEB, SOUTH 1A) SOUTH-COUNTRY 1A1) REGION OF SOUTHERN JUDAH,

SOMETHING TO NOTE

There is something of interest to be seen in the route traveled by Abram to Canaan, and the one taken by Israel several centuries later. It is indicated in the preceding maps.

when they see war, and they return to Egypt: But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt” (Ex 13:17-18).

Add to this the fact that when Israel did arrive at the border of Canaan, they provoked God to anger through their unbelief. They were forced to wander in a circuitous route through the wilderness for forty years, until everyone of that unbelieving generation died.

From this, at least two valid perspectives can be gained.

➡ **SPIRITUAL WEAKNESS MAKES FOR SLOW PROGRESS.** When Israel left Egypt, they were militarily weak. They were not accustomed to warfare, and therefore were taken in a route that avoided hostility. They could not remain in this condition, but had to become stronger. During that time, they were not close to the promised land.

state. The saints of God have been called into a warfare (1 Cor 9:7; 2 Cor 10:3-4; 1 Tim 1:18; 2 Tim 2:3-4; Eph 6:12; 1 Cor 9:26; 1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:7).

➡ **UNBELIEF MAKES FOR WANDERING.** Because Israel refused to believe God, choosing rather to tremble before giants and faint at the sight of walls of resistance, they were blocked from entering the promised land.

Those unbelievers are set forth as examples to those who are in Christ Jesus, lest they come short in the matter of believing God (Heb 3:12-19; 4:6-11). From beginning to end, salvation is “by grace through faith” (Eph 2:5-8). Because of this, faith is not only to be maintained, but must be kept in a state of growth and increase (2 Thess 1:3). **The apprehension of the various benefits of salvation is directly proportionate to the state of ones faith.** I do not believe this is a common perception in the modern church.

It should not surprise us that the life of Abraham contains so many types and shadows. He is, after all, “*the father of us all*” (Rom 4:16) – that is, “*us*” believers. **There is only “one faith,”** and it is the kind Abraham had!

God has often raised up single individuals in whom particular things are made known.

- ➡ **ADAM.** Perfection in creation.
- ➡ **CAIN.** Unbridled nature of sin.
- ➡ **ENOS.** Becoming God-conscious in a fallen world.
- ➡ **ENOCK.** Walking with God in a wicked environment.
- ➡ **METHUSELAH.** Longevity of life.
- ➡ **NOAH.** The saving of some

The apprehension of the various benefits of salvation is directly proportionate to the state of ones faith. I do not believe this is a common perception in the modern church.

Abram took a more direct route to Canaan, while Israel’s trek was of considerably greater length. They traveled southward from Egypt instead of in a northerly direction. This, it is revealed, was in order to avoid a military conflict which would discouraged the heart of the people. Thus, it is written, “*And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent*

The same is true of those who are in Christ Jesus. When they are “*added to the Lord,*” they are not accustomed to spiritual warfare, and are thus led by the Lord in a way that purposefully avoids fierce conflict. **However, should that time of non-militancy extend over an unjustified period of time, little progress will be made toward spiritual maturity.** Less of the benefits that are realized in Christ by faith will be obtainable while they remain in that weakened

because of the righteousness of another.

- ➔ **ABRAHAM.** An exhibit of true faith.
- ➔ **JOSEPH.** The triumph of faithfulness.
- ➔ **MOSES.** Faithfulness.
- ➔ **SAMSON.** Extraordinary strength.
- ➔ **SOLOMON.** Extraordinary wisdom.
- ➔ **DAVID.** Spiritual sensitivity.
- ➔ **JOHN THE BAPTIST.** The power of isolation.
- ➔ **PETER.** The significance of change.
- ➔ **PAUL.** The capacity to understand the things of God.

A POINT OF EMPHASIS

It is imperative that those in Christ see that the faith Abraham had is a Divine exhibition of the faith that saves the soul. A professed faith that is at

Spiritual life is intended to increase in both understanding and doing. The engine that drives this life is faith, and the power that energizes faith is grace.

variance with the faith of Abraham is not faith at all – it is wholly spurious! A professed faith that does not compel the person to obey God, is no faith at all. A faith that does not lead a person to live wholly for the Lord, is a fictitious faith. A faith that does not drive the individual to be where God wants him, is nothing more than a figment of the imagination. **A faith that balks at the promises of God, or considers them to be beyond reach, or not to be desired, is a faith that has its genesis in the devil – not God.**

In Scripture, even those who had were novices, and described as being “weak” in faith, lived conscientiously for the Lord (Rom 14:1-22). **The weakness of such a person is not that**

he does not trust the Lord, but that his scope of understanding the truth is not large enough. Thus he lives under unnecessary restrictions. Yet, such an one does so as unto the Lord.

Spiritual life is intended to increase in both understanding and doing. The engine that drives this life is faith, and the power that energizes faith is grace. If the individual continues to crucify the flesh, taking up his cross every day (Lk 9:23), and if life is lived exclusively “unto Him which died for them and rose again” (2 Cor 5:15), the required advancement in the faith will take place. All of this will be made clear in the life of Abraham. An obvious advancement will become evident in him as his life progresses.

ABRAM WAS VERY RICH

“² And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.” Other versions read, “rich in livestock, silver, and gold,” ^{NKJV} “very wealthy in livestock, and in silver and in gold,” ^{NIV} “had great wealth of cattle and silver and gold,” ^{BBE} “very rich in possession of gold and silver,” ^{DOUAY} “exceedingly wealthy in cattle, in silver, and in gold,” ^{YLT} “He owned many cattle, sheep, and goats, and had a lot of silver and gold,” ^{CEV} “many animals and much silver and gold,” ^{ERV} “extremely rich in livestock and in silver and in gold.” ^{AMPLIFIED}

Abram is the first person of Scripture who is declared to have been rich, or wealthy. Job, who is considered

to have lived during the same time period of Abram, is also noted for having many possessions, being the greatest of all men in the east. “His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east” (Job 1:3). He is not said to have possessed gold or silver, until after his trial, when all of his brothers, sisters, and all who had been his “acquaintance before” gave him “a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold” (Job 42:11).

Other men who are said to have been rich include:

- ➔ Solomon (1 Kgs 10:23).
- ➔ Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:12-18).
- ➔ Joseph of Arimathea (Matt 27:57).
- ➔ A certain “rich man” who “fared sumptuously every day” (Lk 16:19).
- ➔ A young ruler who inquired of Jesus what he should do to obtain eternal life (Lk 18:18-23).

➔ Zacchaeus (Lk 19:2).

In regard to riches, Abram was among the elite of the earth, and is the first one described as having an abundance.

A Modern-Day Error

Some modern-day teachers have

➔ PROMOTE WORRY. *“The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep”* (Eccl 5:12).

➔ IF POSSESSED RICHES ARE NOT TO BE GLORIED IN. *“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his*

➔ THE LOVE OF MONEY IS THE ROOT OF EVIL. *“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”* (1 Tim 6:10).

➔ RICHES ARE UNCERTAIN. *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy”* (1 Tim 6:17).

➔ THE RICH ARE TO REJOICE WHEN THEY ARE MADE LOW. *“Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away”* (James 1:9-10).

The fewness of the godly who were rich contradicts that affirmation, as well as the total absence of anything commendable being said of riches.

used Abraham as an example they say confirms that God desires for His people to be wealthy. **The fewness of the godly who were rich contradicts that affirmation, as well as the total absence of anything commendable being said of riches.** The following words concerning riches of all sorts speak for themselves.

➔ SOMETIMES “LITTLE” IS BETTER. *“A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked”* (Psa 37:16).

➔ DO NOT SET YOUR HEART UPON RICHES. *“Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them”* (Psa 62:10).

➔ ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNGODLY. *“Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches”* (Psa 73:12).

➔ BEFORE GOD, THEY MEAN NOTHING. *“The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all”* (Prov 22:2).

➔ PROMOTES CONCEIT, OR SELF-LOVE. *“The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out”* (Prov 28:11).

wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches” (Jer 9:23).

➔ RICHES MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO ENTER GOD’S KINGDOM. *“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God”* (Matt 19:23-24).

➔ RICHES ARE DECEITFUL, DISTRACTING THE HEART. *“And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful”* (Mark 4:19).

➔ GOD SENDS THE RICH AWAY EMPTY. *“He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away”* (Luke 1:53).

➔ OUR LIFE DOES NOT CONSIST OF THE THINGS WE POSSESS. *“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”* (Luke 12:15).

I do not know how any person of integrity and spiritual understanding can defend the view that God wants His people to be rich, or that they are to be expected when one is living in a posture that is pleasing to God.

It also ought to be noted that during the time of our text, there is a glaring absence of any references to heaven or eternity. The presence of those realities is the environment of true teaching concerning riches.

THE MANNER OF REVELATION

At the time of our text, there had been no revelation about being forever with the Lord, the eternal purpose of God, transformation, or the resurrection body. **All revelation – every recorded instance of it – had to do with life in this world.** The words *“eternal”* and *“eternity”* had not yet been mentioned by the Lord to man. The *“eternal God”* is mentioned by Moses in Deuteronomy 33:17, and God is depicted as one who *“inhabiteth eternity”* by Isaiah (Isa 57:15). Those are the first two uses of those words in Scripture. The word *“everlasting”* was used once before this text in God’s word to Noah: *“And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look*

upon it, that I may remember the **everlasting** covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth” (Gen 9:16). There, the emphasis was on a covenant that was lasting, and probably did not mean the same thing to Noah as it does to those who live under a greater and more extensive light.

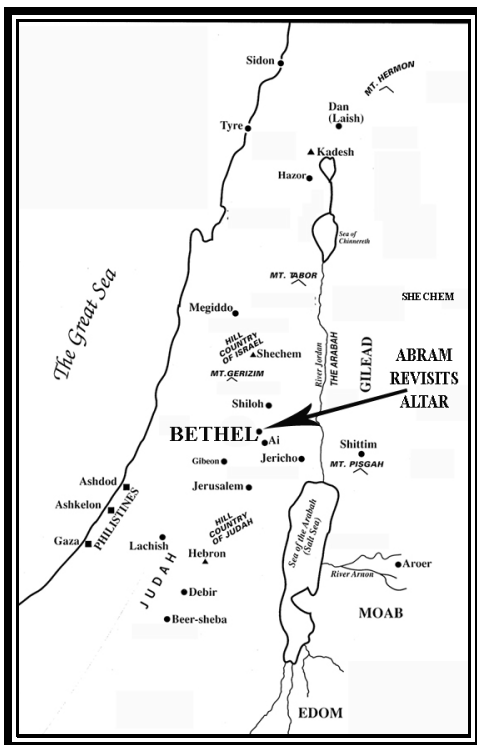
An Example of Faith

Abraham is consistently held out as an example of faith. **He is never declared to be an example of prosperity that God intends for all of His children.** Considering the age in which he lived, and the sparse amount of spiritual light that was given, it seems to me that something would have been written by inspiration if Abraham were intended to

be an example God’s preference to make his people wealthy. Such instruction would certainly have been possible, considering that Moses wrote this record hundreds of years after the events of this text. **It would have been very easy for some inspired editorial remarks to be made that stated God made Abram wealthy as an example.** But, alas, none are found.

WHERE HIS TENT HAD BEEN IN THE BEGINNING

“³ And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai”



Keep in mind that Abram is traveling with his wife, Lot and his family, all of their herds, and their silver and gold as well. The distance is considerably more than two hundred miles. In a journey like that, riches do not appear as advantageous as they do when the person is settled in a

particular place.

A Lesson to Be Learned

Jesus warned that the things of this world and ones’ attraction to them inhibit spiritual life, and finally, if not checked, will stifle it altogether. *“And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful”* (Mark 4:18-19).

Abraham held the things of this world loosely, and was not dominated by a desire for them. We know this is the case because it is said of him, *“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”* (Heb 11:9-10).

Abram was compelled by the promise of God. Because of this he counted the world a *“strange”* place – even when he was in the promised land itself.

Let us learn from this that those in Christ are to be characterized by a certain posture. They are exhorted to *“abstain from fleshly lusts that war*

against the soul” (1 Pet 2:11), not allowing the desire for *“other things”* to enter into their hearts.

Many a professing Christian has stagnated because of having distracting things, and allowing them to shift the emphasis of their life.

HE JOURNEYED TO BETHEL

“And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel . . .” Other versions read, *“he went from place to place until he came to Bethel,”* ^{NIV} *“he journeyed on from the Negebas far as Bethel,”* ^{NRSV} and *“He went by stages from the Negev to Bethel.”* ^{CSB}

This is the second mention of Bethel in the Scripture, the first being when Abram pitched his tent between Bethel and Ai (Gen 12:8). This is the first thing of record that he did after God had appeared to him in Shechem, declaring *“Unto thy seed will I give this land”* (Gen 12:7). After calling upon the name of the Lord, he moved in a southerly direction, finally arriving on Bethel. After building a second altar, he again called upon the name of the Lord. Then he continued going toward the south. It was at that point that he confronted the famine, and went down into Egypt.

WHERE HIS TENT HAD BEEN IN THE BEGINNING

Having left Egypt as a very wealthy man, Abram makes his way to an altar, and afterwards faces a challenge – Given O. Blakely

“ . . . unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai.” Other versions read, “where his tent had been earlier.” NIV

Now, after spending some time in Egypt, he returns to Bethel as though resuming his sojourn in Canaan. He returns to the place he last called upon the name of the Lord in Canaan. There the promise of God was alive in his memory – a promise that had no doubt sustained him while he sojourned in Egypt.

It is important to note that Abram did not return to the place identified with his initial entrance into Canaan: Shechem. That is where he built his first altar, but that is not where he returned. He returned to the place where he built his second altar, and where the promise of God was fresh in his mind. This also was the place of a mountain – a high place in more than one way (Gen 12:8).

A Kingdom Secret

One of the secrets of spiritual growth is knowing where to return when life has lead you into a strange place – whether through duty, some form of spiritual famine, etc. Some people are fond of always thinking of the point where they first were drawn

How good it is to return to these high points of spiritual life, and again survey the realities that were undergirded by great and precious promises – realities that caused faith to increase, fueled our hope, and caused joy to abound.

out of the pit of condemnation. That is the reference point they think best suits their recovery, or momentary setbacks. I am quick to say that there are times when this is the proper thing to do, recalling when you *“first trusted in Christ”* (Eph 1:12). That is an occasion that must never be forgotten. **Even in those remembrances, we must learn to think more deeply about when we first trusted Christ, seeing more in it, perceiving the working of God more thoroughly.**

If the remembrance of our first trust brings joy, thankfulness, and confidence, what of the remembrance of when the day dawned, and *“the Day Star”* arose in our hearts (2 Pet 1:19). Or, what of the time when the *“eyes of our understanding”* were opened, and we saw more clearly *“the hope of His calling . . .”* (Eph 1:18-19). What of the time when you first saw the glory of being justified by faith (Rom 5:1), or the

reality of the inner warfare (Rom 7:15-14), or the distinctions of *“the old man”* and *“the new man”* (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10). What of the time when you saw *“the New Covenant”* in a more grand and effective manner (Heb 8:8:13)? Or when you realized the potency and necessity of edification (Eph 4:11-16)? What of the time you perceived the truth of predestination and election (Rom 8:19-30), or began to comprehend that it is God who works in you *“both to will and to do of His own good pleasure”* (Phil 2:20).

How good it is to return to these high points of spiritual life, and again survey the realities that were undergirded by great and precious promises – realities that caused faith to increase, fueled our hope, and caused joy to abound. This is something that must be seen, and when it is there will be a marked acceleration in growth and spiritual advancement.

THE PLACE OF THE ALTAR

“ 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.”

Here is a place identified by an altar that was built there – *“the place of the altar.”* It was a place of insight and thanksgiving – a high place where Abram had gone after first hearing the promise that the land in which he found himself would be given to his seed. One can only imagine what blessed

memories were associated with that place. He had been faithfully led there by God Himself – a trip of over 1,500 miles. He was better off when he first arrived there, even though he had left his home land, the city of Ur, and his kindred behind. **Now, he is there for the second time, and he is even more blessed than he was the first time.**

A KINGDOM PRINCIPLE

In God’s dealing with men, Jesus taught, the Divine expectation is that

with the passing of time, **the steward of God should increase the measure that has been given to him.** The parables of the talents and the pounds particularly reveals this fact (Matt 25:15-28’ Lk 19:13-24). **The judgment of God will be based upon this principle.**

We must also see that this is built into the very fabric of spiritual life. **The body of Christ as a whole is expected to “increase”** (Eph 4 :16; Col 2:19)). The child of God is to be *“increasing in*

the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10). Love for one another is to "increase" (1 Thess 3:12; 4:10). The word "abound" involves the idea of increase (Rom 15:13; 2 Cor 8:7; 1 Thess 3:12; 4:1; 2 Pet 1:8). The same is true of the word "fruitful" or "fruit," which include the idea of addition and increase (Rom 7:4; Col 1:10). Let it be clear that this is the manner of the Kingdom.

In the life of Abraham, we see this principle lived out. He had more in Haran than he did in Ur. When he returned from Egypt. He had more in Canaan than he did in Haran

One of the great failings of the modern church is its lack of increase in gifts and insight given by God. In an uncomfortably consistent way, the

modern church thinks of increase only in terms of numbers. This is most unfortunate, because the addition of numbers is something that is a Divine activity, not a human one (Acts 2:47). Men labor, but it is always God that gives the increase – not only in numbers, but in personal perception (1 Cor 3:6-7), and other matters pertaining to spiritual advancement.

LOT ALSO HAD FLOCKS, AND HERDS, AND TENTS

"⁵ And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents."

Lot being with Abraham yielded the same results that Moses promised to his brother-in-law's son, if he would join with Israel in their journey to Canaan: *"We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it you:*

the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Psa 1:1). Knowing how to choose proper friends and companions is important. Insightful people will prefer to be around spiritually mature people – like Timothy with Paul.

One of the great weaknesses of our time is the preference of professed

critical times.

➡ **THE HEBREW MIDWIVES.** When Pharaoh commanded the Hebrew midwives to slay all the Hebrew male newborns, they refused to do so, siding with the Jews. This was the revealed result: *"Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty"* (Ex 1:15-21),

➡ **RAHAB OF JERICHO.** Then, there was Rahab, who chose to side with the Israelites, hiding and protecting those who came to spy out the land. When Jericho was destroyed, and before it was burned, it is written, *"And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel"* (Josh 6:23). Rahab is in the Messianic lineage, giving birth to Boaz, great grandfather of David (Matt 1:5).

➡ **RUTH THE MOABITRESS.** After becoming a widow, and being faced with having to make a choice of staying in her homeland or returning with Naomi to Israel, she chose to remain with her mother-in-law Naomi. Her words of determination are recorded for us: *"whither thou*

While this is something that cannot be automated, or caused to happen by men, there are advantages to preferring to be around the people of God.

come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the LORD hath spoken good concerning Israel" (Num 10:29). It is as though the blessing of Abram spilled over into the household of Lot. **While this is something that cannot be automated, or caused to happen by men, there are advantages to preferring to be around the people of God.**

This is the opposite of the expression of the first Psalm: *"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in*

Christians for peers and close friends. Even in supposed recovery groups, people with similar weaknesses think they somehow gain an advantage by being with others who have that same failing. It is also seen in dividing up believers according to certain groups, never allowing for the whole body to be together.

There are several examples of people who gained blessed advantages by choosing the people of God as their companions, or siding with them during

goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God” (Ruth 1:16). Ruth is also in the Messianic lineage, giving birth to Obed, David’s grandfather (Matt 1:5).

➡ A CERTAIN CENTURION. Think of the advantage that a certain centurion gained by preferring the Jews, and even building a synagogue for them (Luke 7:1-10). His son was healed because of that choice.

The impact of chosen companions

upon the lives of people cannot be denied. They play a key role in the shaping of ones life. **Few people have been able to successfully overcome a preference for ungodly people, whether as friends, or as mates.** Evil companions do corrupt good morals (1 Cor 15:33). Om that this was more fully known!

THE LAND WAS NOT ABLE TO BEAR THEM

“⁶ 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.”

We now come to a point where prosperity actually became a hindrance—at least that is how it appeared. **However, we will find that behind the scenes God is working with His purpose in mind.** That fact alters the way that we must view this passage.

As always, the revealed purpose of God is a sort of template that must be placed over the recorded events of Scripture. The Word of God contains history, but it is not a history book, and is not to be read as though it was. When one approaches the Scriptures it is imperative that they consider them *“the word of God.”* We are apprised that *“all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God”* (2 Tim 3:16). We are also told that the mystery that was *“kept secret since the foundation of the*

world,” “is now made manifest by the Scriptures” (Rom 16:26).

As the Scriptures are read and pondered, they must be considered with God’s purpose in mind, for God has orchestrated all of creation and all of history to reflect what He is doing in the world. Everything is driven by a purpose – His eternal purpose (Eph 3:11). In the Scriptures statements are made, and events are said to have taken place to reflect Divine manners and purpose. This is all in order that we may see things properly, or *“walk in the light as He is in the light”* (1 John 1:7).

Even though men like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, etc. were not aware of the details of God’s purpose, they were used to show the nature and effectiveness of what God has determined to do in Christ Jesus. The holy Prophets, who spoke of *“the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow”* (1 Pet 1:11), were only given a rough outline of the purpose of God. Although they searched for and longed to see the details of the Messiah’s salvational reign, to them *“it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into”* (1 Pet 1:12).

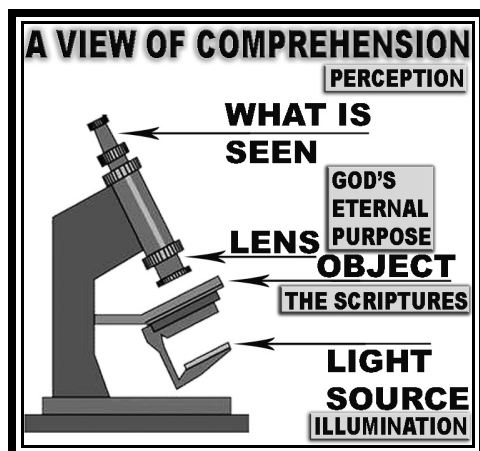
Therefore, as we review this text, we will do so through the Lens of

Divine purpose. Only then will we be given some illumination into the ways and purpose of the Lord. If it is countered that such understanding is not necessary, we must remember that eternal life is meticulously defined as knowing God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3). **It is imperative, therefore, that what CAN be known of God be ingested into the thinking processes of the one who believes and follows Jesus Christ.** I do not know how it is possible to advance in the knowledge of God while remaining ignorant of what can be known of Him.

THE LAND WAS NOT ABLE TO BEAR THEM

“And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: . . .” Other versions read, *“able to support them,”* ^{NKJB} *“could not sustain them,”* ^{NASB} *“the land was not wide enough for the two of them,”* ^{BBE} *“there wasn’t enough pastureland for both of them,”* ^{GWN} *“was not sufficient to accommodate them both at once,”* ^{NJB} *“the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds,”* ^{LIVING} *“did not have space for them in the land,”* ^{ABP} and *“the land was not able to nourish and support them.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

The Scriptures are most precise in describing this situation. **This was not the result of any friction between Abram and Lot.** It was not owing to any fundamental discontent on the part of Lot, or any intolerance for Lot on the



part of Abram.

Their exceeding wealth in flocks and herds Introduced this problem: there simply were not enough natural resources to sustain them both. That is, together they had too many flocks and herds to be fed by the produce there.

THEY COULD NOT DWELL TOGETHER

“ . . . for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.” Other versions read, *“their possessions were so great they could not dwell together,”* ^{NKJV} *“they were not able to remain together,”* ^{NASB} *“they could not live together,”* ^{NRSV} *“There were too many animals for the available pasture,”* ^{LIVING} and *“the land could not support both of them together.”* ^{ERV}

It is not often that this circumstance occurs – when two parties possess more than can be sustained by the same environment. Here, however, is the first example of such as phenomenon.

This is a case where possessions became a hindrance. The livestock owned by Abram and Lot was so significant, that the land could not provide for their feeding.

After spending a rather lengthy period of time together, this was not a pleasant experience for Abram and Lot. They had journeyed together from Ur to Haran, from Haran to Canaan, from Canaan to Egypt, and from Egypt to Canaan. They had extended stays together in Ur, Haran, Canaan, and Egypt. Their households had become accustomed to one another. Now, however, a circumstance had arisen that would interrupt this friendship and closeness.

Behind the Scenes

Behind the scenes, however, God was working out His own purpose, as well as working all things together for the good of his chosen. A promise had been delivered to Abram, and now the

time has come for a fulfilling of the initial stages of that promise. **Even though Lot had been traveling with Abram, the promise made to Abram, did not apply to him. It was for Abram and his seed, and Lot did not fall into that category.** This did not mean God had altogether rejected Lot, for centuries later the Spirit would refer to Lot as *“that righteous man”* (2 Pet 2:8) – a description that cannot be applied to someone God rejects. However, he will not be in the Messianic lineage, and his posterity will not be among those to whom the promise of God applied. **Therefore, a series of events are set in motion in order that the promise of God to Abram might be fulfilled.**

The Application to Coming Out of Babylon

There is a parallel of this occasion with the necessity of coming out of Babylon, that great spiritual harlot that Satan has raised up to compete with the church. Many us spent considerable time in that environment, not realizing its true nature. We made friends with

with our closest friends. **It was because of a shortage of food.** The territory occupied by Babylon cannot grow enough food for those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. It is located too low to receive good supplies of manna for the soul. The ground is too arid to contain the *“wells of salvation”* from which the saints must draw water. There is too much spiritual noise to allow for hearing the personal word, *“This is the way, walk ye in it”* (Isa 30:21).

I do want to emphasis that the soil of Babylon – the place where it is located – is the problem. It allows for too much of the world and its way of thinking, which so neutralizes the soil that the rich things of God simply cannot grow there. Even when a lot of Kingdom seed is sown upon Babylonish soil, it cannot produce fruit. Beneath the surface there are the seeds of *“the care of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things”* (Mk 4:19). There is also a ledge of

I do want to emphasis that the soil of Babylon – the place where it is located – is the problem. It allows for too much of the world and its way of thinking, which so neutralizes the soil that the rich things of God simply cannot grow there.

some who were godly, sharing kindred spiritual objectives and desires. **But there came a time when the environment could no longer sustain us.** There simply was not enough nourishment to sustain us and our associates. We would leave the gatherings with spiritual hunger pangs, and felt in ourselves a certain deterioration that we knew was neither right nor pleasant. Eventually, we had to separate from the environment. It was not because we were an enmity

spiritual rock close to the surface that does not allow roots to grow deep (Matt 13:20-21). This condition results in a spiritual immaturity that cannot stand under persecution or offenses because of the Word.

It is necessary to underscore that the above deficiencies are caused by Babylon’s ways. It is a system of religion that allows for a merging of worldly manners with religion, and that is a poisonous and inhibiting mixture.

All of these things finally result in a deficiency of food. Lambs, who live off of the milk of others, may survive for a while. But eventually there will not be

enough food to nourish them. They will be forced to live in an emaciated state, and, unless they separate, they will finally die. **We see these principles**

being lived out in the lives of Abram and Lot. The environment caused strife, and strife brought separation.

STRIFE AMONG THE HERDMEN

“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.”

While I am sure that Abram and Lot knew of this condition and were not comfortable with it, there was no strife between them. **Their care for one another did not allow for contention between them.** Further, they apparently saw that the situation really could not be remedied by remaining in that condition. Perhaps they made some effort to resolve the situation, but there is no record of such attempts. If they would both diminish their possessions, they could probably arrive at a condition where the land could sustain them both. Apparently this was not acceptable to them.

seem to realize that they must consent to not eating enough in order to remain in a Babylonish environment. They imagine that they can sustain their lives by small private gardens of truth. This methodology will work for a season if you are John isolated on the Isle of Patmos, or Paul in a jail cell. **However, spiritual life is not intended to be maintained by that means.** God adds people to the church, making them members of Christ's body, which is the environment that sustains the soul.

STRIFE BETWEEN THE HERDMEN

“And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle . . .” Other versions read, *“the keepers,”* ^{BBE} *“those feeding,”* ^{YLT} *“shepherds,”* ^{ERV} and *“men who took care of.”* ^{GNB}

negotiate times when one group would have the advantage over the other group. At any rate, the *“strife”* was their attempt to resolve the situation, but they could not do so.

Another Application

In the Christian world, most strife is also among the herdmen –the ones who are charged with feeding the flock of God. Their disputes do not exactly parallel those described in our text, but they are about what is to be given to the sheep of God's pasture. The disputation also arises because of the scarcity of food in the place where they are dwelling. That is not the way they view it, but that is actually the way it is. **When religious leaders argue over the interpretations of texts, or the validity of the customs they have chosen to honor, it is largely because of the lack of nourishing food.** They are occupying a place that is not conducive to spiritual nourishment, and that yields a great amount of discontent. However, just as with the herdmen of Abram and Lot, dissension does not produce food!

when there is not enough spiritual food, there are some who are quite willing to live on meager rations for the soul. They seem to realize that they must consent to not eating enough in order to remain in a Babylonish environment.

An Application

It ought to be noted that in matters pertaining to life and godliness, when there is not enough spiritual food, there are some who are quite willing to live on meager rations for the soul. **They**

Those charged with caring for the flocks saw there was not enough food for the herds of both Abram and Lot, and therefore began to dispute among themselves. No doubt they were attempting to justify having one group being given more food than the other one. Perhaps they attempted to

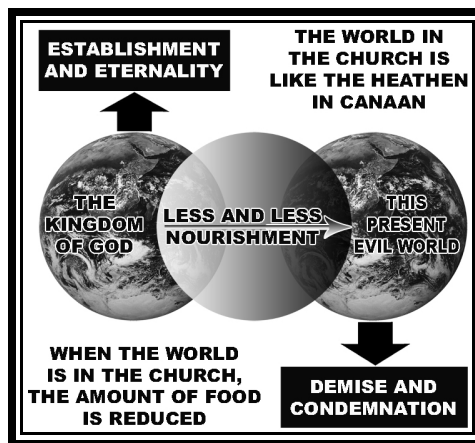
THE CANAANITE AND PERIZZITE DWELLED IN THE LAND

“ . . . and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.” Other versions read, *“The Canaanites and Perizzites were **also** living in the land at that time,”* ^{NIV} *“**At that time** the Canaanites and the Perizzites dwelt in the land,”* ^{RSV} *“**despite the danger they all faced** from the tribes of Canaanites and Perizzites present in the land,”* ^{LIVING} *“And the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land [**making fodder more difficult to obtain**].”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Some of the lack of food was owing to the competition that existed in the obtaining of it. The Canaanites and the Perizzites were also in that area, and they needed food for their flocks also.

This is one of two places (Gen 13:7; 34:30) where the Canaanites and Perizzites are mentioned together, apparently standing for all of the heathen occupants of Canaan. Their presence in Canaan presented several liabilities.

- ➔ They wanted the land for themselves.
- ➔ They were hostile toward the people God had chosen.
- ➔ They competed for the available food.



An Observation

Those involved in disputes among brethren fail to take into consideration the enemies of the world that are all about. **The more agitation and unwarranted dispute there is, the closer to the world one has to be, for useless controversy is an expression of the**

flesh. “*The works of the flesh*” include expressions that are present in the kind of strife that is to be avoided: “*hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies*” (Gal 5:20).

When you get close to the world, there is more competition for sustenance. There is also a corresponding difficulty in identifying what really is required to sustain life.

Where ones religion allows for a lot of disputation, you will find a diminishment of spiritual food. There is an approach to religion that thrives on controversy.

However, the alert soul will sense that certain controversies have a way opening the door to the spiritual Canaanites and Perizzites that tend to consume resources, but offer none in return.

LET THERE BE NO STRIFE

“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 are not told how long the dissension between the herdmen continued, but I am sure it was not for long. Even though Abram, owing to the nature of the time in which he lived, knew comparatively little about God and his ways, **he seemed to sense that this was something that had to be brought to an end.** He would not allow this circumstance to drive a wedge between him and Lot.

ABRAM SAID TO LOT

“And Abram said unto Lot . . .”

Abram initiated the conversation. That does not mean Lot had no concern about it. It rather indicates that Abram was more sensitive about the matter. If this is true, it is not because of Abram’s natural makeup or personality. It was

rather owing to his calling by, and exposure to, the Lord God Almighty.

An Observation

There is something about exposure to the Lord that causes the heart to be more tender and supple. This is because “*God is light*” (1 John 1:5), and those who willingly linger in His presence are affected favorably by it.

If you have been in the Lord for any length of time, you have no doubt observed the sensitivity that is awakened by exposure to an environment in which the Lord is working. **There are benefits realized that are not readily available elsewhere.**

Right here we see one of the reasons for the backward stance that is found in many professed Christian congregations. **There is little in their gatherings that is related to the presence of the Lord.** His Word is not

set forth with clarity, and His ways are not declared or seen. Meetings are infrequent, and when they do occur, the people are exposed to very little spiritual substance. The horizon of a godly understanding is not expanded, and the awareness of the will and ways of the Lord are not extended. As a result, growing up into Christ becomes virtually impossible.

LET THERE BE NO STRIFE

“Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen . . .” Other versions read, “*let’s not have any quarreling,*”^{NIV} “*no argument,*”^{BBE} “*no contention,*”^{DARBY} “*discord,*”^{NJB} “*conflict,*”^{NLT} “*fighting between . . .*”^{LIVING} “*battle,*”^{ABP} and “*arguing.*”^{ERV}

This is the first time the Hebrew word translated “*strife*” (meriybah) is used in Scripture. The second place is where Israel strove against Moses,.

Murmuring because there was no water. The place where this took place was called *“Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel”* (Ex 17:7). Confirming the seriousness of such contention, that incident is referred to number of times in Scripture (Num 20:13,24; 27:14; Deut 32:51; 33:8; Psa 81:7; 95:8; 105:32; Ezek 47:19; 48:28).

Even in those spiritually primitive times, Abram knew that **“strife” among brethren was not proper, and should be avoided if at all possible.**

How Much More Now!

How much more should there be a holy revulsion when contentions arise among those who are in Christ Jesus. We know very well that such cannot be totally avoided, for, as Paul puts it, *“For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be*

made manifest among you” (1 Cor 11:19). However, the children of the Lord have no appetite for such things.

It also ought to be noted that Abram and Lot were not only related in the flesh, they were also related by the faith, and common commitment to the one true God.

WE BE BRETHREN

“ . . . for we be brethren.” Other versions read, *“we are brothers,”* ^{NASB} *“we are kindred,”* ^{NRSV} *“we are kinsmen,”* ^{RSV} *“we are relatives,”* ^{CSB} *“Close relatives,”* ^{LIVING} and *“family,”* ^{MESSAGE}

In the world, men say such things as *“blood is thicker than water,”* referring to the close bond that is realized by natural relationships. Ordinarily, men will put up with things within their family that they would never forbear in others.

However, Abram’s observation **extended beyond the border of kinsmen in the flesh.** He observed that they must not allow contentions among their herdmen as well, who were not kinsmen to them. Many of them had been acquired while they were away from their native homeland – in Haran, and in Egypt as well (Gen 12:5,16). He knew that contention in the household defiles the whole environment, and therefore he would take measures to eliminate this strife.

Let There Be No Divisions

Solemnly Paul admonishes the church, *“Let there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”* (1 Cor 1:10). That is the antithesis of having contentions among the one another. It does not appear that many take this seriously.

IS NOT THE WHOLE LAND BEFORE THEE

“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.”

We will see in Abram that a person of faith can make hard decisions, humble himself, and be content. Additionally, we will gain some understanding of how the Lord works within the hearts of those to whom He has revealed Himself.

IS NOT THE WHOLE LAND BEFORE THEE?

“Is not the whole land before thee?” Other versions read, *“Isn’t the whole land there in front of you?”* ^{CSB} *“Isn’t all this land yours also,”* ^{GWN} *“Is not the whole land at your disposal,”* ^{NAB} *“The whole countryside is open to you,”* ^{NLT} *“There is plenty of land for you*

to choose from,” ^{CEV} *“Look around. Isn’t there plenty of land out there?”* ^{MESSAGE}

point. It was not until Lot had separated from him that Abraham was told, *“Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the*

Was Abraham presuming when he offered Lot his choice of the land? Not at all! God had not promised Abram the land at this point.

The complicating factor here is that the land had been promised to the seed of Abram. When God *“appeared”* unto Abram at his arrival at Schecum He said, *“Unto thy seed will I give this land”* (Gen 12:7). Was Abraham presuming when he offered Lot his choice of the land? Not at all! God had not promised Abram the land at this

place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward” (Gen 13:14). Some time later that God said to him, *“I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it”* (Gen 15:7).

However, that was not known by Abram at this point. Further, the

boundaries of the land given to him and his seed were not given until the time God told Abram He was going to give him the land (Gen 15:18-21)

Moses received some additional boundary information after Israel came out of Egypt (Ex 23:31). Even more details were given to Joshua several centuries later (Josh 1:4

We should not expect Abram to conduct his life as though all of these things were known to him at the time of our text. Beside all of this, the contention was not between Abram, and Lot, nor was the strife among the herdmen a sharp contention about the

THE WORDS OF JESUS

There are some things that are expected of those who are in Christ Jesus. The lord has called them to a sacrificial life, in which they lose their lives in order that in order that they might gain them. Jesus taught, *“he that **loseth his life for My sake shall find it**”* (Matt 10:39). Luke records Jesus saying, *“If any man will come after me, let him **deny himself**, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me”* (Luke 9:23). Again, He said, *“whosoever shall **lose his life shall preserve it**”* (Luke 17:33). And again Jesus said, *“He that **loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal**”* (John 12:25).

*every man also on **the things of others**”* (Phil 2:4). He wrote to the brethren in Rome, *“in honor **preferring one another**”* (Rom 12:10). Peter wrote, *“Yea, all of you **be subject one to another**, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble”* (1 Pet 5:5).

Do these things seem too difficult for those claiming identity with the Son of God? **Let them remember Abram, who did them all when all he knew is that God was going to give the land in which he found himself to his seed.** He had no other commitment from God, and no revelation of the nature of God. Surely he will stand up in the day of judgment and witness against professing Christians who never learned to die to themselves and this world!

SEPARATE THYSELF

“ . . . separate thyself, I pray thee, from me . . . ” Other versions read, *“Let’s part company,”* ^{NIV} *“let us go our separate ways,”* ^{BBE} *“depart from me,”* ^{DOUAY} *“Please separate from me,”* ^{NASB} *“Go in the opposite direction to me,”* ^{NJB} and *“be parted.”* ^{YLT}

This was not a bitter parting, but a necessary one. The word translated “separate” is defined as follows: **פָּרַד** PARAD {PAW-RAD} **MEANING:** 1) TO SEPARATE, DIVIDE 1A) (QAL) TO DIVIDE 1B) (NIPHAL) 1B1) TO DIVIDE, SEPARATE 1B2) TO BE DIVIDED, BE SEPARATED 1C) (PIEL) TO BE SEPARATED 1D) (PUAL) TO BE DIVIDED 1E) (HIPHIL) 1E1) TO DIVIDE, SEPARATE 1E2) TO MAKE A DIVISION, MAKE A SEPARATION 1F) (HITHPAEL) TO BE DIVIDED, BE SEPARATED, GET SEPARATED.”

Some of the versions present Abram’s words as a kind of agreement to separate from one another: *“Let’s part company,”* ^{NIV} *“let us go our separate ways.”* ^{BBE} This, however, is not a proper assessment of Abram’s words. **He was giving Lot the first choice, as he will later state.** He was not calling upon Lot to agree that they should separate from one another, but that he should depart from Abram. In a great display of humility, he was deferring to Lot.

While some are wondering just how this can be done, Abram surfaces, occupying a period of time in which there is absolutely no record of such words ever being uttered. He lived out the truth of them just as though he knew them well.

ownership of the land. The difficulty was there were not enough resources there for Abram and Lot to dwell in the same part of the land.

The Superb Example of Abram

THE WORDS OF MOSES

Centuries after the events of our text, God revealed to Moses the necessity of loving one’s neighbor as himself. The summation of the second table of the Law was, *“Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD”* (Lev 19:18). **While these words were never spoken to Abram, he lived out the truth them, confirming that identity with the Lord results in an awareness that comes from the Law being “written in their hearts”** (Rom 2:15).

While some are wondering just how this can be done, Abram surfaces, occupying a period of time in which there is absolutely no record of such words ever being uttered. He lived out the truth of them just as though he knew them well.

THE WORDS OF THE APOSTLES

Apostolic doctrine took up where Jesus left off, expounding the true nature of life in Christ Jesus. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *“Let no man seek his own, but every man **another’s wealth**”* (1 Cor 10:24). He said of his own life, *“Even as I please all men in all things, **not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved**”* (1 Cor 10:33). It is said of real love, *“**seeketh not her own**”* (1 Cor 13:5). Paul; wrote to the Philippians, *“Look not every man on his own things, but*

“IF” AND “THEN”

“ . . . 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.”

Placing himself into the background, and willing to be content with the outcome of Lot’s choice, Abram told Lot to make his choice with the understanding that Abram would take what is left, and do so with a spirit of contentment, and no regrets. We are being exposed to a great man.

THE LOT IS CAST INTO THE LAP

This is what the Scripture refers to as casting the lot into the lap. It looks as though it is a sort of gamble, but that is not at all the case. Speaking of this manner, Solomon wrote, *“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD”* (Prov 16:33). Other versions read, *“The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD,”* ^{NASB} *“The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is the Lord’s alone,”* ^{NRSV} *“A thing may be put to the decision of chance, but it comes about through the Lord,”* ^{BBE} *“We may throw the dice, but the LORD determines how they fall,”* ^{NLT} *“Into the center is the lot cast, And from Jehovah is all its judgment,”* ^{YLT} and

The truth of the matter is that there are times when we do not know precisely what to do. Two or more valid alternatives may be before us. It is not always appropriate simply to remain where we are, idle and in questioning.

“The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is wholly of the Lord [even the events that seem accidental are really ordered by Him].” ^{AMPLIFIED}

The casting of lots appears on the surface to be depending upon chance. Yet, this was the way the sections of Canaan were divided to Israel (Josh 18:10). This is how they populated Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah, bringing one of every ten families to live in the city (Neh 11:1). It is also the method the early disciples used to select one to take Judas’ place, so his bishopric was not left idol. Incidentally, If Paul was really the replacement for Judas, then his office was left vacant for a number of years – possibly as many as ten. This would have violated the proscription made through the

Psalmist (Psa 109:8; Acts 1:20).

The truth of the matter is that there are times when we do not know precisely what to do. Two or more valid alternatives may be before us. It is not always appropriate simply to remain where we are, idle and in questioning. Sometimes we must do as Paul and company did when they were spreading the Word of God. In some way, the Spirit forbade them to go into Asia. As though casting lots, Luke writes, *“After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not”* (Acts 16:7). They proceeded to Troas, and there were directed by God to go to Macedonia (Acts 16:8-10). **Living by faith is the context in which such direction takes place.** That is the kind of thing that is being lived out in this text.

THE PLAIN OF JORDAN

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.”*

LOT BEHELD ALL THE PLAIN OF JORDAN

“And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan . . .” Other versions read *“the valley of Jordan,”* ^{NASB} *“the Jordan valley,”* ^{NRSV}

“the country about the Jordan,” ^{DOUAY} *“the whole circuit of the Jordan,”* ^{YLT} and *“the fertile plains of the Jordan River.”* ^{LIVING}

Lot looks at the southerly region, beholding all *“the plain of Jordan,”* otherwise known as the Jordan valley (also mentioned in 1 Kings 7:46 and 2 Chronicles 4:17). Jordan is the primary river flowing *“THROUGH A DEEP VALLEY DOWN THE CENTER OF THE COUNTRY FROM NORTH TO SOUTH. THE PRINCIPAL RIVER OF THE ENTIRE REGION.”* ^{McCLINTOK & STRONG’S}

WELL WATERED EVERYWHERE, AS THE GARDEN OF THE LORD

“ . . . 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.”

The area Lot chose was conducive to bearing a lot of produce for his herds and flocks. It bordered both sides of the Jordan river, which provided an abundance of water. It was such a lush area that it was likened to *“the garden*

of the Lord” in Eden, and the rich portion of Egypt that reached into the southern portion of Canaan. Both Eden and Egypt were watered by rivers of considerable size.

It ought to be noted that Lot is not said to have chosen the area because of its cities – particularly Sodom and Gomorrah – but rather for its natural resources.

Mention is made of the fact that this was *“before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.”* – a judgment that is frequently mentioned in Scripture (Gen 19:24-25; Deut 28:23; 32:32; Isa 19-10; 13:19; Jer 23:14; 49:18;

50:40; Amos 4:11; Zeph 2:9; Matt 10:15; 11:23-24; Mk 6:11; Lk 10:12; 17:29; 2 Pet 2:6; Jude 1:7).

The *“Dead Sea,”* which is a salt sea fills up the area once occupied by Sodom, Gomorrah, and *“the cities of the plain”* (Gen 13:12; 119:29) – i.e. *“the plain of Jordan.”*

And here, before these wicked cities become a focus of Divine attention and judgment, they are mentioned. **Once noted for occupying a fertile region, rich with resources, they became known for their profligacy and licentiousness.** In them we see an example of the true condition of those

who prosper in this world – a condition revealed to Asaph the singer: *“Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image”* (Psa 73:18-20).

This brief mention of Sodom and Gomorrah confirms that the Scriptures are written with the purpose of God in mind. That is why references like this are found throughout them. God’s purpose is seen throughout Scripture.

LOT CHOSE ALL THE PLAIN OF JORDAN

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

As we consider this choice, we must keep in mind the fact that although man made an alternative choice, *“every decision is of the Lord”* ^{NKJV} (Prov 16:33). While this may be difficult for some to comprehend, the Word of God must be embraced, knowing that Divine decisions are always righteous, and in strict comportment with His purposes. **It may not appear to be so clear on the surface, but as time marches forward, we will see that God was preparing a circumstance in which He would be glorified. Eventually the choice of Lot will provide several helpful examples.**

- ➡ An example of the impact of ungodly manners upon a righteous man (2 Pet 2:8).
- ➡ An example of deliverance from temptation (2 Pet 2:8-9).
- ➡ The example of Lot’s wife (Lk

17:32).

➡ The impact of a godly man on an ungodly populous (Gen 19:9).

➡ A type of the end of the world (Lk 17:28).

I suppose some might reason that these things just happened, and later God took them and made examples of them. Such views do not take into account the government of God (Psa 22:28), the pervading will of God (), Dan 4:35), that all things are of God (Rom 11:30; 1 Cor 8:6; 2 Cor 5:18), and that everything is moving toward an appointed conclusion, or *“the end”* (1 Cor 1:8; 15:24; Heb 3:6,14; 6:11; 1 Pet 1:13; 4:7; Rev 2:26).

LOT CHOSE

“Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east . . .”

In a sense, this was an act of faith. Remember, the Canaanite and Perizzites were in the land. There were cities, and kings present in the land. **Yet Lot chose the land just as though it had no occupants.** He was thinking of his herds

and flocks – and that was a noble consideration.

Lot journeyed in an easterly direction. Technically, it was in a south-easterly direction. **However, if you consider where he would conclude his journey, it would be east of where he began between Bethel and Ai.**

A Point to Be Made

It is important to observe that where we end up is the main thing. **It is possible to wander about like Israel for forty years, and get nowhere.** Or, it is possible to take a journey to a specific location, and make it there safely – like Abram traveling from Ur to Haran, from Haran to Shecum, from Shecum to Bethel, from Bethel to Egypt, and from Egypt back to Canaan. **The successful journey to a place appointed by God is a testimony of Divine direction and the faithfulness of His people.**

THEY SEPARATED THEMSELVES

“ . . . and they separated themselves the one from the other.”

Thus, after a rather lengthy tenure together, Abram and Lot are formally

separated, each going their separate ways, yet with no hostility between them. They spent several years together

without experiencing any friction among themselves. They are a good example

for all men in the matter of spending time together.

ABRAM AND LOT DWELL WHERE THEY PREFERRED

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

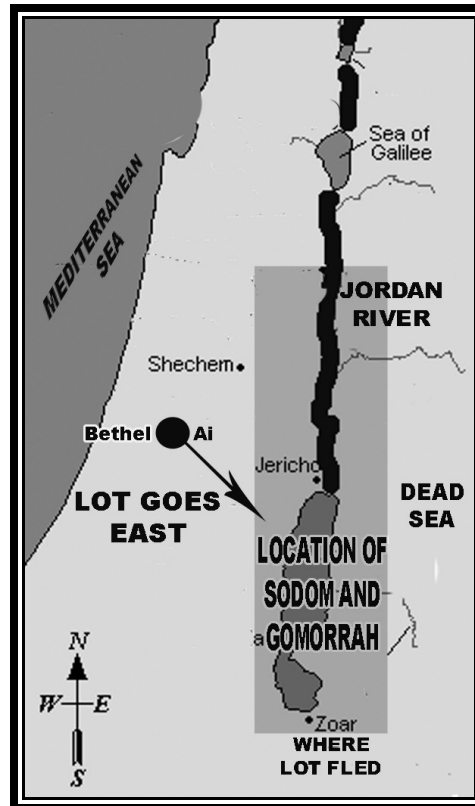
Both Abram and Lot settled in where they desired. Lot was given the first choice, and Abram adapted his choice to it.

ABRAM DWELT IN CANAAN

"Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan . . ."

Canaan was the land to which God had called Abram. When God first called Abram He said, *"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee"* (Gen 12:1). **At that point He did not identify the land.**

When the Lord later *"appeared unto Abram,"* after he had arrived in Canaan, He promised, *"Unto thy seed will I give this land"* (Gen 12:7). **This could have been about fifteen years from Abram's calling.** At that point He said nothing about Abram himself inheriting the land. It is not until some time later that God said to Abram, *"I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it"* (Gen 15:7). In the same day, God reaffirmed that the land would be given to Abram's seed: *"Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates"* (Gen 15:18). **This is calculated to have been about nine years from the initial promise that the land would be given to Abram's seed.** What does all of this mean?



It means that God was directing this whole affair, not Abram, and certainly not Lot. They both made decisions, for the lot was cast into their lap. However, the Lord worked in and through them to bring them to where He wanted them. **This episode with the contentious herdmen was HOW God worked things together for the good of Abram.** It is how he brought him to occupy the very territory he was going to give him. You might say, it *"was not of works, lest any man should boast."*

The Application

The application ought to be abundantly clear. *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way"* (Psa 37:23).

Jeremiah also saw this truth: *"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (Jer 10:23). The complexity of this is reflected in a Solomonic observation: *"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps"* (Prov 16:9). The Amplified Bible reads, *"A man's mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps and makes them sure."*

Particularly in Abram's case, this should not be difficult to see – at least not when you perceive what the Lord was doing. **Ultimately, the call and direction of Abraham had to do with the entrance of the Lord's Christ into the world.** His entrance would come through a certain nation (Isa 9:6; Rom 9:5). It would be through a particular person (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23), in a particular town (Mic 5:2; John 7:42), and at a particular time (Gal 4:4).

Will any person dare to say that a procedure like that would be placed wholly into the hands of men? Does such specific language suggest that God simply saw what men were going to do? Or, did He work in men, as the Word of God everywhere attests?

LOT DWELT IN THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN

" . . . and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom."

Why didn't Lot choose the northern part of the land, or the place where Jerusalem and Bethlehem were located, leaving the Jordan Valley near Sodom for Abram? The answer should be obvious to all. **God was in this matter!**

Some have chosen to speak derisively of Lot, declaring that he preferred Sodom, and was fundamentally a worldly man. **However, that is not what God said about Lot.** It is not how Abraham regarded him either. He was not ashamed to be identified with Lot.

CONCLUSION

Commencing with the twelfth chapter of Genesis, the particulars of the development of God's salvational purpose begin. This is HOW God prepared to bring His Son into the world. The working with Abraham is the commencement of a focused plan that will eventuate in the bruising of

Satan, the plundering of higher despotic powers, and the ending of the Law for righteousness. We are being exposed to the beginnings of something that will bring an end to the reign of sin, bring in everlasting righteousness, and produce the creation of a "new man" who will be harmonious with God Himself. A

means will be introduced by which men can come to God, be changed from glory to glory, and at last reign with Christ. **That is what this is really about, and it is also why God Himself is managing things to the finest detail, making things work toward the fulfillment of His own eternal purpose.**

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 11/18/11. We will continue our series of lessons on the book of Genesis. The twenty-second lesson will cover chapter 13:13 through verse 17 of chapter Fourteen: "SODOM'S STANDING BEFORE THE LORD." Here was a city whose citizens had a certain ranking in heaven: "wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." After Lot was separated from Abram, the Lord renewed His covenant with him. As time progresses, Lot is captured by heathen kings. Hearing of it, Abram took his servants and, in an orderly and strategic manner, delivered Lot, bringing back all of the people who were taken, and all of their possessions. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.



2011 PREACHING FESTIVAL

Theme:

ILLUMINATION AND ITS REDEMPITIVE FUNCTION

Friday, Saturday, Lord's Day
7:00 PM 1:00 PM 9:00 AM

NOVEMBER 11-13, 2011
AT THE BLAKELY HOME