

Abram Followed God

Genesis 13

Abram Returned to the Land

Genesis 13:1-4

Abram's Blessings: *Genesis 13:1-2*

Abram was Allowed to Return

After nearly losing all that he held dear, Abram left Egypt with his wife restored and family safe. This was a testimony of God's grace. Though he stumbled, Abram was blessed and continued to fellowship with the LORD. As we live for God, mistakes will be made, instead of persisting in sin or wallowing in discouragement, we need to seek God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

Abram's nephew Lot remained with the family. Evidently he traveled to Egypt with Abram during the famine and returned with him afterwards. It is believed the famine was finished when Abram and his family made their way back to the land God promised him.

Abram was Wealthy

Abram left Egypt a wealthy man. The LORD generously blessed, which probably encouraged Abram and strengthened his faith.

1. *Abram was rich in cattle* – It refers to sheep, oxen, camels, and donkeys. This is the first mention of Abram's cattle, probably because they were gained during his stay in Egypt. The cattle would become a problem for Abram and Lot.
2. *Abram was rich in silver and gold* – Like the cattle, they were probably accumulated in Egypt. Apparently, Abram was extremely wealthy.

Abram was not reprimanded for his riches because there is nothing wrong with wealth. The problem is greed, the love of money (1 Timothy 6:10). Greed traps those that hunger and lust after riches, believing wealth produces happiness. The unfortunate ones that fall into this trap live without joy, peace, and contentment, no matter how much they possess. It is possible to have material riches without being greedy. Wealth may come by inheritance, gifts, hard work, wise investments, or diligent saving. Riches are not forbidden, just the love of those riches. Sometimes wealth becomes a burden instead of a blessing because the more we have the more we have to deal with and possibly lose. Whether we are blessed with wealth or not, it is best to trust in God because earthly riches may fade away and be gone in an instant. (Proverbs 23:5)

Abram's Restoration: *Genesis 13:3-4*

Abram Went to Bethel

Abram returned to the mountain between Bethel and Hai where he previously built an altar. The place is known as Mt. Ephraim and is located about four miles north of Jerusalem. Abram went back to where he once worshiped the LORD and walked in his ways. It appears that Abram understood the importance of returning to the LORD after a mistake.

Abram Went to the LORD

On Mt. Ephraim Abram called upon the name of the LORD. The details of Abram's prayer are not given but it probably included repentance and worship. It is important to pray to God, whether to thank Him, praise Him or find His forgiveness (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Abram was forgiven but he had to live with the effects of his sin. While in Egypt he became rich, but those possessions would be the source of strife with Lot's herdsmen. Sarai also found a handmaid in Egypt, Hagar, who would become a hindrance to Abram and his family. Like Abram, we may find forgiveness but we will also live with the results of our decisions (Galatians 6:7-8). That's why it is best to abide in Christ and allow the Spirit to lead. By walking with God it is possible to make correct decisions.

Abram Remained in the Land

Genesis 13:5-18

Abram's Discretion: *Genesis 13:5-9*

Abram Recognized the Problem

Both Abram and Lot had great possessions, including flocks, herds, and tents. Due to their newfound treasures, mobility was limited and each required more land. It was only a matter of time before troubles would arise. Because of their possessions and close proximity strife occurred between their herdsmen. The Bible offers no details concerning the strife; it was probably over land for the animals. Evidently, Abram and Lot were not at odds, just their workers. We are told the Canaanites and Perizzites, inhabitants of the land, were aware of the problem, which may have made Abram and Lot vulnerable to an attack. It was definitely a bad testimony before the world (Philippians 2:14).

It became clear that Abram and Lot could no longer dwell together. Poverty and hardships could not separate them but riches and possessions could. Every joy and comfort in this world has its downside, that's why it's best to put our trust in the LORD.

Abram Addressed the Problem

Abram handled the situation with wisdom and humility. Realizing something had to be done, he did not ignore or avoid the problem. Abram wisely knew the fighting would escalate between the herdsmen until he and Lot were involved. Abram initiated the conversation to ensure peace between the two. As believers, we are to do our best to live in peace (Romans 12:18). Abram did not force Lot to separate but advised him to do so.

Abram humbly deferred to Lot, allowing him to choose the land he desired. Abram had the right to pick, seeing he was eldest, led by God, and seeking peace. He could have looked at Lot and said, "It's time for you to go, God has given me this land." Instead, Abram waived his right. He was more concerned with peace than gaining worldly possessions. Lot should have returned the favor, it would have been the correct and proper thing to do, but he gladly accepted Abram's offer. In choosing first he displayed a greedy and selfish heart. For Abram, it was an act of faith. Lot's desire was a mystery to him but he generously allowed his nephew to go first and trusted God with the matter. Believers should do their best to live by faith in all areas and at all times.

Abram's Dwelling: *Genesis 13:10-13*

Lot Chose the Land He Desired

Lot looked upon the land and staked his claim on what appeared to be the best. The land of his choice was well watered, making it ideal for his flocks and herds. It flourished with beautiful gardens and established cities. Lot likely believed the portion provided the greatest opportunity to increase his substance. It is interesting that he chose an area that reminded him of Egypt. Perhaps he missed Egypt and its earthy treasures. The land was also near the worldly cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot pitched his tent towards the wicked cities, knowing better than to live amongst sinners he was willing to live nearby in order to have the best the world had to offer. There is nothing wrong with having or choosing the best, however Lot made his decision based solely upon appearance. He never asked God for direction and failed to consider the wickedness he would surround his family with, or chose to ignore it.

The inhabitants of Sodom were wicked sinners before the LORD. John Gill says they were, "guilty of the most notorious crimes, and addicted to the most scandalous and unnatural lusts that can be thought of; and these they committed openly and publicly in the sight of God, in the most daring and impudent manner, and in defiance of him, without any fear or shame." If Lot was unaware of their sin, he was not paying attention. More than likely, Lot believed having flourishing land was worth living near the world. It was a terrible decision; Lot hurt his family and eventually lost his paradise. Believers are often faced with similar decisions, whether accepting a job, finding a place to live, or choosing a school for their children. Sadly, many decide without sincerely seeking God's direction through His word and failing to recognize the danger of sin. They choose what they want instead of what is best spiritually. Sadly, many are willing to trade Biblical direction for a little comfort on earth. Like Lot, they are willing to compromise to have a little more and like Lot they will reap what they sow. Those that choose to live in the world will also suffer like the world.

Abram Settled in the Land

Abram, without argument, accepted the land Lot rejected. He settled in the open country known as Canaan, away from the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Evidently Abram was content, which indicates he was more concerned with seeking God than worldly treasures. He may have been without the world's best but he walked with God and was blessed. Abram never lost the promise, or his family.

At this point, Abram and Lot went their separate ways, which was probably best for Abram. Lot's choice of land and future decisions display his love for the world. Because of this, it was necessary for Abram to separate from him. In doing so, Abram protected himself from the world. John Phillips explains it this way, "True biblical separation is not isolation, but insulation. It is living in the world as a believer without being of the world." To walk with God, we must separate from sin and this world (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). Failing to do so, leads to compromise and troubles.

Abram's Direction: *Genesis 13:14-18*

Abram Was Encouraged

The LORD appeared unto Abram for the third time. This occurred after Abram returned to the land and separated from Lot. Though he was living for the world, Lot was still family and it is always difficult to separate from those we love, whether it is physical or spiritual separation. In this case it appears to be both. Lot also took what appeared to be the best land. Abram was only human and may have questioned the decision allowing Lot to pick first.

It is at this time the LORD spoke to Abram. Whether Abram was discouraged or not, the LORD knew what he required. Nothing escapes God's knowledge, He is aware of all that occurs in our life (Psalm 139:2). The LORD is able to provide all of our needs and will do so at the correct time. With God, we are never alone or forsaken (Hebrews 13:5).

Abram Was Blessed Greatly

As he stood on Mt. Ephraim gazing over the land, Abram was promised all that could be seen in every direction. This was a promise from The LORD for him and his seed. The Bible indicates that God will give His people the land in the future (Psalm 104, 37). In his lifetime Abram never possessed the entire land, but believed he would have it because it was promised to him (Hebrews 11:9-10). To Abram, it mattered not where he lived while on earth, his hope was in a heavenly country, a land prepared for him and his people. With the promise of land, also came the promise of a great family. Lot chose all that he could get, not much, while Abram let God choose for him and received a greater portion. Today, many are living for the world's treasures instead of God's glory (Matthew 6:19:21). Why live for things that will pass away when we can live for God and His eternal treasures (1 John 2:15-17).

Abram moved to the plain of Mamre in Hebron, which was about 25-30 miles from Mt. Ephraim. This may have been a practical move after the split with Lot or a move in recognition of the LORD'S promise concerning the land. It appears Abram settled there and lived his life, even being buried in this general location (Genesis 25:9). There in Mamre, Abram built an altar and worshiped the LORD. He was probably grateful for God's promises.

Conclusion

Abram stumbled but God did not forsake him, he looked to God and was restored. Later, Abram generously allowed Lot to pick his portion of the land first, choosing to trust in God instead of living for the treasures of the world. Today, God has allowed us a similar choice, choose to follow Him or live for the world. In making your decision it is wise to remember, *...the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. 1 John 2:17*

Point to Ponder

God has more to give than what the world is able to offer.

Quote

"Lot perhaps had the better land, yet Abram had the better title. Lot had the paradise, such as it was, but Abram had the promise." Matthew Henry

Questions

When Abram returned to the land, what did he do?

Why is it best to trust in God instead of riches?

What was the problem between Abram and Lot?

Why did Lot choose the portion of land near Sodom?

What new truth have you learned from this lesson?