



## An Adventure of Faith: Walking With Abraham

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### 1. We're into our 4<sup>th</sup> week of our study on: **An Adventure of Faith: Walking with Abraham**

- remember, this study isn't really so much about Abraham as it is the GOD of Abraham
- we're going to learn a lot from Abraham's life, but we want to focus on the hand of God at work through the life of Abraham
- Next week we'll study *Genesis 15: How Big Is Your God?* - God tells Abram and Sarai they are going to have a baby!

### 2. *Up and Down*

- this is part of the up & down cycle of the life of Abraham – like 'one step forward' and two steps backward – kind of sounds like us?
- and . . . while he failed in chp. 12, in chp. 13, his journey of faith takes a step of growth and he exercises his faith in a way that brings glory to God!

### 3. Thankfully, God has revealed Himself to us through His Word, and there are lessons to learn about God and how He works in the lives of men/women: Remember a key verse . . .

- ❖ **Romans 15:4 For whatever was written in earlier times [reference to the OT] was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.**

### 4. Our focus today in Genesis 14 is:

1. **We Need to Stretch Our Faith in Times of Conflict**
2. **We Need to Stretch Our Faith for Personal Involvement**
3. **We Need to Stretch Our Faith in Times of Blessing and Temptation**

#### I. **We Need to Stretch Our Faith in Times of Conflict – 14:1-12**

- we're not going to take the time to read v. 1-12 – only take a 'fly by' and point out a few verses and explain the contexts
- basically, there were 5 kings of what we could call 'city states' – they were not independent, but rather were living under the rule of one king, the king of Babylon at this time – this had been going on for 12 years (14:4)
  - ❖ Genesis 14:4 Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, **but the thirteenth year they** [the 5 kings] **rebelled** [against 4 kings – main one, Chedorlaomer].
- \* **This is where the curse of sin continues to reveal itself!** – part of the *enmity* that God spoke of to Adam in Gen. 3, and a further extension of Cain's attitude/actions in Gen. 4, etc.
- the 'rebellion' revealed the . . .

## A. Conflicts over temporal things – *land & possessions!*

- There have been multiple battles for this piece of property
  - > Mostly coming from Egypt on the South, Hittites (modern Turkey) on the North, or Babylon/Assyria from the East.
  - > Late in Israel's history, Assyria took the land over in 722 BC; then Babylon in 586 BC.

[Note: It would help if people would listen to God and what He promised to Abraham!]

- The piece of land was the cross roads of the world at that time.
- In this account, we see kings of the East, Babylon, desiring control over this region.

### **Q: Why is this piece of land so important?**

A: Whoever controlled this narrow strip of land and its trade routes controlled the world at that time. (Take a look at the map)

- ⇒ Any trade that was between the Iraq/Iran region and Egypt had to go through the land God was going to give Abraham.
- ⇒ And trade that would flow from the NORTH region toward Egypt would have to go through the "Promised Land".

[See attachment for additional information about the piece of real estate called the "promised land"]

- let's pick it up in 14:10:

**10. Now the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell into them. But those who survived fled to the hill country. 11. Then they [the invading kings] took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed.**

[Teacher's Note: The common route invaders from the East take comes into Canaan from the NE to avoid the desert between Canaan and Babylon/Assyria. They would depart from Canaan by the same way. When invading they would travel from the Babylon area along the route of the "fertile crescent" which follows the Euphrates river then they would turn down South into the land of Canaan. Abraham will chase them northward as far as Dan (see map).]

- These invading "kings" are basically *thugs* and *raiders* after the spoil – it's all about things . . . stuff that is temporal
  - > often times, the very thing we pursue, we never attain – we always want more

**Lesson: Our satisfaction is found in our relationship with Jesus Christ!**

-that's why the Psalmist could write:

❖ **Psalm 73:25 Whom have I in heaven *but You?* And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.**

**v. 12. They also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom.**

- another aspect of this conflict was . . .

## B. Control over people

- these kings weren't just after *things*, they wanted to dominate and control people – they wanted more slaves and more wives.
- They aren't seeking to the best for others – no concern for the fact that people are made in the image and likeness of God – they wanted to USE them for selfish purposes
- they probably had no idea who Lot was – and if they did, in their pride, they didn't care

**Note:** There is always some evil tyrant like Chedorlaomer who wants to put you in bondage. If you leave the things of the Lord like Lot did and walk off into the world, you can count on forming evil habit and lusts that are difficult to break,

> In fact, like Lot, you won't get free unless the Lord intervenes!

**Point:** It takes FAITH to respond to this type of situation – the greater the conflict, the greater the need for genuine faith – God is about to stretch Abraham's faith!

**Input: What other conflicts in the Scriptures, or in your life, have you faced that God 'stretched' your faith?** [various answers]

- v. 13 teaches us that . . .

## II. We Need to Stretch Our Faith for Personal Involvement

- that's one of the characteristics of genuine faith

### A. Faith involves ACTION – it gets involved!

- James put it this way:

❖ **James 1:25** But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law of liberty*, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Example: Peter getting out of the boat and walking on water! [Matthew 14:29]

- Biblical Christianity is a religion of ACTION – it's about DOING things for the glory of God!

- Walking by faith implies PROGRESS . . . GROWTH . . . INVOLVEMENT in the plan of God!

-notice v. 13

### 13. Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew . . .

- "Abram the Hebrew" is an unusual term for Abraham at this point.

*"Abram, having been promised national tenure in the land in the immediately preceding episode, is now placed at the center of a different kind of narrative that makes him a figure on the international historical scene . . ."* – Robert Altar

v. 13 (continues). . . Now he [Abraham] was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram.

- Notice Abraham's influence in the land is spreading. He has "allies!"

- in the next verse, we will see he has 318 trained men born among his house—that is, his hired help and the children they bore!]

14. When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. 15. He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. 16. He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people.

Point: These verbs imply ACTIONS that Abraham took – DOING something a/b the problem!

### B. Faith implies some degree of RISK!

- He didn't know how God was going to bless him or how difficult this would be:

**Lesson: Faith leads us to do the RIGHT thing, not the EASY thing!**

### **Input: How *could* Abraham have responded to this situation with Lot?**

A: Lot made his choice – let him live with it!

- while that is true sometimes, it's not the *norm* with God and those who follow Him

### **Lesson: It's interesting to see how GRACE & FAITH walk together!**

- A person of genuine faith (focusing on God and Who He is) will also be a person of grace (giving to others what they do not deserve because that's the nature of our God!!)
- Abraham fought these kings and won – he dealt with them quickly and thoroughly.

Q: *How did this happen?* – God was certainly blessing Abraham – just as He promised!

### **Input: What other act of grace & faith do you see in Abraham in v. 16?**

- Note that Abraham also dealt righteously with “*the people*” of his land.
- He rescued Lot and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah [remember, these Canaanites in the land, especially Sodom and Gomorrah, were wicked]
- But Abraham still dealt righteously with them. He could have simply let the Sodomites and Gomorrahites (sp?) be captured and taken. – but grace and faith made the difference!

**ILLUSTRATION**: Tie this into our ministry to the survivors of Hurricane Katrina – and other Community Ministries we are starting to get involved in!

- look at v. 17-20

**17. Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). 18. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. 19. He blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20. And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand . . . ”**

### **III. We Need to Stretch Our Faith in Times of Blessing and Important Decisions – 14:17-14**

- by stability I mean – keeping our focus on God and what He has promised – to let our faith rest on the eternal, not hope in the temporal things of life

#### **A. Faith helps us to handle times of blessings – 14:17-20**

- The contrast between Melchizedek and King of Sodom begins.
- Ultimately the point of the story is right here.
  - > The King of Sodom responds *grudging* // the King/Priest of Salem blesses Abraham.
- Remember the covenant: Promise #2 – God said those who bless Abraham will be blessed; those who curse Abraham will be cursed.

Q: *Did God fulfill His promise?* – Consider this:

- 1) Jerusalem ultimately becomes the capital of Israel – it becomes the blessed city of God.
- 2) Sodom and Gomorrah, archaeologists speculate, are lying at the bottom of the Dead Sea.

Point: God fulfills His promises.

- Also, Melchizedek is said to be a priest of “God Most High.”
  - > The Canaanites had a pantheon of gods (multiple gods).
  - > The highest of the gods in the pantheon was called “El” which translated simply is “god.”

- ⇒ The phrase “El (god) most high” most likely refers to this highest Canaanite god.
- Melchizedek, while recognizing a most high god, still most likely believed in many gods.
    - > also, he most likely did not know the one, true, high God of Abraham by His Name.
  - Abraham in v. 22 actually clarifies that the most high God actually has a name—*Yahweh* (translated “LORD” – the covenant-keeping God).
    - > Abraham is visibly and actively bearing the image of the true God—bringing His name to the land and living in the land in a righteous fashion.
  - He is becoming the visible representation of the invisible God. Some bless him, like Melchizedek, but others grudgingly acknowledge him, like the King of Sodom.

*Q: Does that sound like any NT passages to you?*

> How about **Matthew 5:13-16** [READ] and 2 Cor. 5:20:

- ❖ **2 Corinthians 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.**

[Teacher’s Note: We should note the relationship between Melchizedek and Christ in Hebrews 7. In Hebrews the Jewish believers were struggling to accept Christ as a high priest. Christ was not from the priestly lineage of the Levites. So calling Christ a High Priest for his people, yet not coming from the tribe of Levi was tempting many of the Jewish believers to falter in their belief in Christ as Messiah. The argument of Hebrews 7 is that Christ is “of the order of Melchizedek” [i.e. Christ is not only a Priest, but He is also a King—just like Melchizedek (king of Salem and priest of god most high)]. Thus Christ is King of Jerusalem (and the world) and priest of THE God most high. He was “*higher*” in rank than Levites and is not bound by genealogical heritage. Historically, the offices of King and Priest were ultimately separated in the monarchy of Israel probably for the same reasons we separate powers in the USA—to maintain a sense of checks and balances in institutionalized authority. However, Christ combines all the offices into one person— Prophet, Priest, King, Judge]

## **20. . . . He gave him a tenth of all.**

- Melchizedek blesses Abraham, and Melchizedek gets a blessing in return!! Just like God promised in Gen 12 (“those who bless you, I will bless!”)

Note: Tithing was an old and widespread custom in the ancient orient. Tithes were given to both sanctuaries and kings. Melchizedek qualifies on both counts. Here, however, it is probably in virtue of his priesthood that Abram gives him a tithe.

- For as Abram has received a priestly blessing from Melchizedek, it is fitting that he should respond in the customary fashion – an example of generosity BEFORE THE LAW!.
  - > Abram (cf. Jacob Gen. 28:22), father of the nation, sets an example for all his descendants to follow (cf. later God gives specific expectations in the Law on tithing: Num 18; Lev 27:30–33).]

## **B. Faith helps us to handle important decisions**

**21. The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.” 22. Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth,**

- notice where the object of his faith is directed: to the LORD God Most High
  - > note the reference to Yahweh, the LORD, being the Creator – He owns the universe and the earth, why would I need to cut a deal wit you?

**23 (continues) . . . that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ 24. “I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share.”**

[Here it is presupposed that Abram, the victor, has a right to keep the spoils for himself. But having given a tenth to Melchizedek, he gives the rest to the king of Sodom. The greediness/selfishness of the king of Sodom stands in stark contrast to Melchizedek’s generosity.

Sodom brought nothing, whereas Melchizedek brought out bread and wine.

Melchizedek blessed Abram. Sodom makes a short, almost rude demand of just six words: “Give me people; take property yourself.” There is none of the customary courtesy here. The word order (note how he mentions “giving” before “taking”) reflects Sodom’s ungracious self-centeredness.

As their rescuer, Abram presumably had a right to both the people and the property that he had recovered. All Abram asks for is what he cannot give back—the food that has been consumed and the men who went with him. While he forfeits his rightful share, he does not expect his allies to forfeit their share. Abram swears he is not interested in keeping for himself even the smallest items of booty—the thread or sandal thong—let alone anything of value.

### **Conclusion:**

**1. The proper function of a servant of God is to bring His name to a sin-cursed world!**

**2. God uses people who are:**

- ✓ **Willing to dwell in a challenging land**
- ✓ **Exercising faith in promises he doesn’t understand**
- ✓ **Acting in righteousness in taking his stand**
- ✓ **Claiming God’s Name for the strength of his hand**

cf. Christ and His example and the “servant” in Isaiah 42:1-4

**Study Notes**  
**An Adventure of Faith: Walking With Abraham**  
**#4 Getting Your Faith Stretched – Genesis 14**

**Introduction:**

- ❖ Romans 15:4 *For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

**I. We Need to Stretch Our Faith in Times of Conflict – 14:1-12**

- \* This is where the curse of sin continues to reveal itself!

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*Q: Why is this piece of land so important?*

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**ILLUSTRATION:**

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  - ✓ \_\_\_\_\_ **in taking his stand**
  - ✓ \_\_\_\_\_ **for the strength of his hand**



