

## Genesis, Part 14

In the last session, we saw Abram, a man of faith, have his faith fail. God had placed him in the land and told him it would be his despite the fact it was then occupied by a heathen people. There was also famine in the land, and Abram got scared. What he failed to remember is, that if God puts you somewhere, then He is obliged to support you there, Canaanites or no Canaanites, famine or no famine. But Abram's faith failed him, and he went down to Egypt to find safety.

**Isa. 31:1** Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help

Egypt is used in the Bible as a type for the world and its desires. Going there physically as well as mentally was exactly the wrong thing for Abram to do. He then doubled down on his lack of faith by having his wife Sarai lie and say she was his sister to avoid the possibility that Pharaoh would see how beautiful she was, kill him (her husband), and take her as his wife. He sacrificed his honor and compromised his wife for his safety.

God was perfectly capable of providing for Abram and his family in Canaan. There was no need for him to relocate to Egypt and less so for him to create the deception concerning Sarai. But he did it anyway. He overthought the problem.

**Prov 3:5** Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

As believers, reasoning is not how we see. We see as little children – trusting. Overthinking the problem with human viewpoint can only lead to confusion, and what we need to do will never be clear. Spiritual confusion can only be conquered by obedience. Only when we obey do we have discernment because in disobedience we are not where we are supposed to be and have lost our intimate relationship with the Spirit and His guidance.

Abram had gotten out of “his place” when he went to Egypt, and the deception about Sarai being his sister only exacerbated the problem. That

negated the effectiveness of his calling. All the while he was in Egypt he was out of fellowship (in a condition of disobedience), and God didn't speak to him.

When you do something like that, you can expect to see some corrective action from God. This is generally called "chastisement". And please understand the word should not necessarily be seen as discipline, although that can be part of it. Chastisement is God taking corrective actions to urge His own back to where they are supposed to be and doing what they are supposed to be doing. Yes, chastisement can sometimes be painful, even very painful, but discipline is not its purpose. The purpose of chastisement is correction. And out of that correction will come blessing.

God brought plagues on the house of Pharaoh once more proving to be faithful to His word even when His children were not. Pharaoh soon figured out who was responsible for his problems and promptly gave Abram his wife back, chastised him for what he had done, and sent him packing for the border.

This would not be the last time Abram, this "man of faith," would trust not in the power and leading of God and instead trust in his own understanding and attempt to solve a problem himself with human viewpoint. As we shall continue to see in later chapters, Abram's story is filled with "ups and downs" of faith when he devises human solutions to problems that God has already solved. It took a while, but ultimately he became the true man of faith he was called to be.

**Gen 13:1** So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negev.

<sup>2</sup> Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. <sup>3</sup> And he journeyed on from the Negev as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, <sup>4</sup> to the place where he had made an altar at the first. And there Abram called upon the name of the Lord.

We find our "intrepid" travelers back where they are supposed to be: in the land, with an altar, and "calling upon the name of the Lord". This also applies to all of us who are believers: God has a place for us to be and

something for us to do there. No exceptions! The questions we all must answer, in the privacy of our own souls and in fellowship with our Lord, are these:

1. Am I where I am supposed to be?
2. Am I doing what I am being called to do?

Maybe you can't answer these questions because you are a new believer, haven't fully developed your relationship with God through the indwelling Holy Spirit, and have not yet learned to "read" that "still small voice" in your head. And maybe God is preparing you for your ministry, and you aren't even aware you are being prepared. With some spiritual gifts, especially to be a teacher of the Word or evangelist, that may take a while. Don't fret. God will lead you to do what He wants you to do – all in His good timing. When you are where you ought to be, you should feel a sense of His working in you and peace of mind. If not, confess your sins and pray about it. He WILL answer. But be prepared to obey when He does. I spent years studying the Word before God said, "Okay, time for you to teach that now." He "told" me that by providentially placing me in a place where I had to teach. Circumstances demanded it. You must believe that if He calls you to some action, no matter how crazy it may first seem, He is self-obliged to fully support you there.

Abram left Egypt with wealth, which proved to be a cause of dissension within the family, as we shall shortly see. Abram left Egypt with his wife. He almost lost her there. Only by God's grace did he get her back from Pharaoh. He left with Lot, although Lot's heart remained in Egypt. But Abram didn't leave all of "Egypt" in Egypt. Sarai acquired a little Egyptian handmaiden there named Hagar, and she will become a problem.

**Gen 13:5** And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, <sup>6</sup> so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together, <sup>7</sup> and there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were dwelling in the land.

Here is where that Egyptian prosperity became an issue. After being chastised by Pharaoh for his very stupid scheme, he came up out of Egypt “very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.” And so did Lot. We need to understand that Abram’s entourage was very large and consisted of many “cowboys” and herders to manage the herds and flocks. Being wealthy, he also had a large household service staff.

At the end of verse 7, we are reminded of the physical and spiritual threat of the totally corrupt and violent Canaanites and Perizzites that are all around them. Furthermore, as representative of the one true God, Abram was obliged to conduct himself accordingly to witness to the heathen through his actions. A quarreling bunch of believers is not a good witness.

**Gen 13:8** Then Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. <sup>9</sup> Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left.”

Abram’s solution to the strife was to magnanimously give Lot the first choice of the land. Here is irony, for one might expect Abram to cling to what was promised to him and tell Lot to go find his own place. Abram took the initiative in settling the difficulty with Lot. He could have insisted upon his “rights,” but instead he suggested that the two part company. Better a geographical separation, than an escalation of bitterness. He graciously offered to let Lot choose the area where he wished to live.

The motivation for this concern must not be missed—they were relatives (v. 8). Their common bond shared over such a long period was to Abram something worth saving. To keep that intact, separation seemed the only possibility.

**Gen 13:10** And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) <sup>11</sup> So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other. <sup>12</sup> Abram

settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. <sup>13</sup> Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.

Lot chose for himself the best part of the land. Before the Lord destroyed the cities of the plain, this region was lush and fertile. To Lot, it looked like the rich Nile Delta in Egypt. Lot's choice reveals much about his character:

1. **His pride** (vv. 8–9) – The younger should submit to the elder (1 Peter 5:5), yet Lot put himself ahead of Abram. What a gracious man Abram was. He was anxious to make peace (Ps. 133). While Abram was concerned about maintaining a good testimony, Lot was concerned only about himself. But “pride goes before destruction” (Prov. 16:18, NKJV), and Lot was to lose everything!
2. **His unbelief** (v. 10a) – He “lifted up his eyes”—he lived by sight, not by faith. Had Lot consulted God, he would have discovered that Sodom was on the agenda to be destroyed, but instead, he trusted his own sight and chose the wealthy, wicked city.
3. **His worldliness** (v. 10b) – The land Lot saw was “like the land of Egypt”—that was all that mattered! Lot was walking according to the flesh, living for the things of the world. The area around Sodom looked well-watered and fruitful to Lot, but to God, it was wicked (v. 13). Unbelievers today, like Lot, anchor their hopes on this world and laugh at the idea that God will one day destroy the world with fire (2 Peter 3).
4. **His selfishness** (v. 11) – Lot's success was due mainly to Abram's kindness, yet the young man left his generous uncle and tried to take “the best” for himself. Of course, God wanted to separate Lot and Abram (12:1), but from a human standpoint, it was a painful separation.
5. **His heedlessness** (v. 12) – First, Lot looked toward Sodom. Then he moved toward Sodom. Before long (14:12 and 19:1), he was living in Sodom.

Lot journeyed east, and instead of walking with the light, he went toward the darkness (Prov. 4:18). While Lot was getting farther from the Lord, Abram was drawing closer! Lot was becoming a friend of the world (James 4:4); Abram was becoming the friend of God (James 2:23).

Lot thought that Sodom was a place of peace and protection; however, it turned out to be a place of warfare and danger! Saints rarely are “captured by the world” suddenly. They enter into the place of danger by degrees. With Lot, the process began when he adopted Egypt as his standard and began to walk by sight instead of by faith.

So the brethren separated. The dispute was resolved because of the gracious spirit of Abram. Within a few months, however, Lot’s choice would involve both men in dangerous circumstances.

**Gen 13:14** The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, <sup>15</sup> for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. <sup>16</sup> I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. <sup>17</sup> Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.” <sup>18</sup> So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.

The Lord appeared to Abram for the fourth time at Bethel. Abram needed encouragement at this time, and the Lord did not fail him. Although he had been walking by faith, the Lord told him to lift up his eyes and look toward the four directions of the compass. God thus undergirded the faith of this man by showing him exactly what his inheritance would be.

Two aspects of God’s Promise to the patriarch were amplified. Two significant enlargements of the possession aspect were made.

1. The ambiguous “this land” of 12:7 became “all the land which you see” from the region of Bethel. The adverb “forever” underscored the permanence of the gift (13:14–15).
2. To the progeny aspect of the Genesis 12 Promise a magnificent metaphor was added. God would make Abram’s descendants “as uncountable as the dust of the earth.”

God told Abraham to lift up his eyes and behold the entire land. The people of the world claim what their eyes can see, while the people of faith claim what God's eyes can see! Lot took a part of the land, but Abraham was given all of the land. God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him (Matt. 6:33).

God promised to bless Abraham's seed. Verse 17 makes it clear that the believer must step out on God's promises and claim them by faith (Josh. 1:3).

Lot had lost his altar and would soon lose his tent (19:30), but Abraham still had his tent and altar. It pays to walk by faith and trust the Word of God!

## **Chapter 14**

Genesis 14 records the most unusual incident in the life of Abram. This chapter is unique in four ways:

1. Abram appeared in a new role as the head of a sizable desert clan and as an astute military chieftain.
2. Abram was given the title "the Hebrew" (14:13).
3. The chapter contains an unusual number of proper names both of persons and places.
4. Five times the chapter contains explanatory notes about the geographical proper names. The author wished to make this ancient account understandable to his audience.

In Genesis 14, because of Lot Abram became embroiled in international conflict in the area. This is no Jewish fantasy designed to glorify Abram. The account bears all the earmarks of sober history.

Thematically the chapter serves to illustrate again the principle "those who bless you I will bless, and those who curse you I will curse" (Gen 12:3). In 12:15 Sarai was "taken" by Pharaoh and this resulted in plagues on the takers. Here Lot was taken (14:12) by foreigners with equally devastating results.

We have four things in the story of this chapter.

1. A war with the king of Sodom and his allies (v. 1–11).

2. The captivity of Lot in that war (v. 12).
3. Abram's rescue of Lot from that captivity, with the victory he obtained over the conquerors (v. 13–16).
4. Abram's return from the expedition (v. 17), with an account of what passed between him and the king of Salem (v. 18–20) and between him and the king of Sodom (v. 21–24).

So here we have that promise to Abram in part fulfilled, that God would make his name great.

**Gen 14:1** In the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, <sup>2</sup> these kings made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). <sup>3</sup> And all these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). <sup>4</sup> Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. <sup>5</sup> In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, <sup>6</sup> and the Horites in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the border of the wilderness. <sup>7</sup> Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh) and defeated all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hazazon-tamar. <sup>8</sup> Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out, and they joined battle in the Valley of Siddim <sup>9</sup> with Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings against five. <sup>10</sup> Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country. <sup>11</sup> So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. <sup>12</sup> They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.

What we have here is a war. Five kings against four kings. Chapter 14 describes a typical “international” skirmish in the ancient world in which



powerful nations formed a coalition to plunder and subjugate areas near the border of the land promised to Abram.

The kings of the five cities of the area where Lot had settled served Chedorlaomer, king of Elam. After twelve years, the kings formed an alliance and rebelled against their overlord. This probably means that they withheld the annual tribute.

Those four kings: Chedorlaomer, Tidal, Amraphel, and Arioch (Gen. 14:9)—went down the eastern side of the Jordan, turned around in the Arabah (the rift valley south of the Dead Sea), went up to Kadesh, over to Tamar, and then to the region of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Valley of Siddim (vv. 8, 10). The five cities of the plain were close together at the southern end of the valley.

The five kings of the plain drew up their battle lines in the Valley of Siddim at the southern tip of the Dead Sea. The five kings were not able to hold out long against the superior forces of Chedorlaomer. The defenders fled to the hills for safety. Many fell into the bitumen pits in that region. Sodom and Gomorrah were sacked. The four kings looted Sodom and Gomorrah, and since Lot was then living in Sodom, he and all his possessions were carried off by Chedorlaomer.

**Gen 14:13** Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner. These were allies of Abram. <sup>14</sup> When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. <sup>15</sup> And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. <sup>16</sup> Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.

Hearing of the invasion and the capture of Lot, Abram mustered his 318 trained men and together with his allies (v. 13) pursued and defeated the invaders in a night attack. Abram was dwelling in Hebron (13:18), but had a covenant with Mamre the Amorite and his brothers Eshcol and Aner (14:13;

cf. v. 24). Here this covenant worked in favor of Abram, for these Amorites, who allowed him to dwell with them, had to fight with him.

He pursued the invaders all the way to Dan, the future northern border of the Promised Land 140 miles from Abram's home in Hebron. Dan was then named Leshem (Josh. 19:47) or Laish (Jud. 18:29). Abram divided his forces and hit the enemy camp from two sides in a daring night attack that surprised and thoroughly routed them. They skedaddled and Abram pursued them on to Hobah, another 100 miles north of Dan, and brought back Lot, his possessions, and his family along with the other freed captives.

This was a striking victory for the patriarch over four leading kings who had previously conquered such an extensive portion of Transjordan and the area south of the Dead Sea. Abram, with just 318 herdsman, evidently trained in combat, and with his allies, was able to defeat this army. Well-devised tactics played a big part, but a larger part was played by God being in Abram's camp. Later in verse 20, Melchizedek attributes the victory to God.

Abram the Hebrew (*'ibri*, Gen. 14:13) was now recognized as a clan leader. This is the first occurrence in the Bible of the word "Hebrew." The word means "one from beyond".

**Gen 14:17** 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). <sup>18</sup> And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was a priest of God Most High.)  
<sup>19</sup> And he blessed him and said,  
    "Blessed be Abram by God Most High,  
    Possessor of heaven and earth;  
<sup>20</sup> and blessed be God Most High,  
    who has delivered your enemies into your hand!"  
And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

This is one of the most fascinating encounters in the Old Testament. Two kings met Abram on his return from the battle, and they could not possibly

have been more different. In contrast with the wicked city of Sodom and its ruler Bera (v. 2), who also was undoubtedly wicked, was Melchizedek king of Salem (i.e., Jerusalem, Ps. 76:2), a priest of *'el 'elyon* (God Most High, Gen. 14:18).

Some believe Melchizedek is a theophany, the appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ. The writer of Hebrews regarded Melchizedek as a type representing Christ. Some points of similarity are noted in Hebrews 7:4–10:

1. The name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness;”
2. He was king of Salem (“peace”);
3. He was a priest of God,
4. but “without mother and father,” i.e., no genealogy;
5. He blessed Abram; and
6. He received the tithe from him.

Melchizedek is the only person whom Abram recognized as his spiritual superior and God’s revelation was not limited to him. While the reader’s attention is focused on Abram carrying the whole spiritual hope of the world, there emerged out of an obscure Canaanite valley a man nearer to God than Abram was, and he blessed Abram. That valley was the Valley of Shaveh (v. 17), possibly the Kidron Valley near Jerusalem (cf. 2 Sam 18:18). Abram accepted blessing from him (v. 19), and Abram paid him a 10th (a tithe) of all he had (v. 20). Abram did this deliberately, in full awareness of what he was doing. It shows how unthreatened and humble Abram was, even after a victory.

Melchizedek is an important figure in the Bible. Preceding Abram, he was not a Levitical priest. When David, the first Israelite king to sit on Melchizedek’s throne, prophesied that his great Descendant, the Messiah, would be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4), David looked beyond the Levitical priesthood which would eventually be done away with.

The Book of Hebrews demonstrates how Jesus Christ in His death fulfilled the Levitical order and began a better high priesthood. In referring to Melchizedek as the perfect type of Christ, the writer of Hebrews capitalized on Melchizedek’s anonymity: in a book (Genesis) filled with genealogies

and ancestral notations, this man appeared without family records (Heb. 7:3). Melchizedek is remembered as a high priest. Because Abram paid tithes to Melchizedek, the order of Melchizedek is superior to Levi, who descended from Abram (Heb. 7:4–10).

The priest/king pronounced a blessing over Abram and praised God Most High for the victory that he had won. Abram responded by giving Melchizedek “a tenth of everything,” i.e., of the spoils taken in the battle. This is the first instance of tithing in the Bible.

**Gen 14:21** And the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.” <sup>22</sup> But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have lifted my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, <sup>23</sup> that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ <sup>24</sup> I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share.”

The king of Sodom also met Abram when he returned from battle. He offered to allow Abram to keep all the spoils that he had recaptured from the kings. Abram, however, had taken an oath (“I have lifted my hand to the Lord...”) not to accept any gift from the Sodomite. He had once eagerly accepted a monetary reward from Pharaoh. His attitude was now different. This believer did not ever want it to be said that he had gained his wealth because of the generosity of an unbeliever. Abram would accept only expenses—the food which his servants had eaten. Abram’s Canaanite allies Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre were not bound by the oath and consequently did receive their share of the spoils.

This incident was a test of Abram’s faith after a great victory. Bera, Sodom’s king, offered a most appealing deal. But Abram, knowing what he knew about the king of Sodom, felt that keeping Sodom’s loot which he captured would make him subject to Bera. He wanted something far more enduring than possessions and wealth; he wanted the fulfillment of God’s miraculous and enduring promise. Faith looks beyond the riches of this world to the grander prospects God has in store.

Abram knew that he would become more prosperous, and he knew who was blessing him. He intended to receive everything from God and not even a thread from Sodom. Obedient believers frame their lives so that for all success, joy, comfort, and prosperity they depend on God—but their faith is like Abram’s, deeply rooted and growing stronger rather than brief and weak. The king of Sodom was a wicked man ruling over a wicked empire; Abram discerned that dealing with him might be dangerous. Abram could have reasoned that God was seeking to bless him using this offer. But he could not bring himself to equate the blessing of God with the best that Sodom had to offer.

Did this battle and night of danger bring Lot to his senses? Alas, it did not! In 19:1 we see him right back in Sodom. Lot’s heart was in Sodom, and that is where his body had to go.