

STUDY TWO — GENESIS 13-14
KINGS & NATIONS

P R O M I S E

— GENESIS 12-25 —

GOD'S GRACIOUS INITIATIVE
IN THE LIFE & TIMES OF ABRAHAM

OVERVIEW

Genesis 13 – Abram’s failure in Egypt is here followed by a renewed expression of trust in God. Like Abram, we too are often a strange mix of faith and of self-centred reliance.

The chapter begins as Abram retraces his steps back through the Promised Land to recapture his previous walk with God (cf. 12:8). In the face of failure, true faith turns to God in repentance, depending not upon our own merit, but upon God’s mercy. Abram exhibits this.

Abram’s faith however, is soon tested, this time not by the adversity of famine, but by prosperity. Where previously Abram had relied upon his own cunning, the worship which envelopes this chapter (13:4 & 18), suggests a renewed prayerful dependence upon God.

Accordingly, in contrast to Lot, Abram walks by faith, not by sight (2 Cor 5:7). Secure in the knowledge that God will grant him the Promised Land, Abram feels no compulsion to grasp at God’s promises and so pull rank on Lot. Instead, he peaceably and generously lets Lot decide. Abram’s faith is affirmed with a re-iteration of the Lord’s covenant promises (14-17).

Lot on the other hand, like Eve before him, disregards God on the basis of what appeals to the eye (Gen 3:6). Not concerned about Sodom’s wickedness, Lot pitches his tents *near* Sodom (13:12) and eventually ends up *in* Sodom (14:12). Lot moves to the very outer reaches of the Promised Land and away from Abram and the focus of God’s promised blessing. Lot’s example warns us against being like those who would jeopardise the spiritual well-being of their families in the name of material and financial pursuits.

Genesis 14 – Lot’s entanglement with the Sodomites soon lands him into trouble. The detail given to the conquest of Kedorlaomer and his allies shows us what Abram was up against. This ruling coalition included the powerful king of Babylon (aka Shinar) and had defeated tribes otherwise reputed as mighty (cf. 4:5; Deut 2:20-21).

Yet Abram walks by faith, not by sight. Though not recognised as such, he knew that by rights he was God’s appointed King of the land and so intervenes with God’s authority to bring about justice. The raiding armies would soon learn the force of Genesis 12:3, “whoever curses you I will curse.”

Abram’s potentially costly intervention to save an undeserving kinsman foreshadows Christ’s costly rescue of undeserving sinners who also failed to appreciate his reign. As those redeemed, Christ empowers us and calls us to do the same. Abram’s refusal to benefit from the exceptional evil of Sodom is also an example for us.

PROMISE+FULFILMENT

MELCHIZEDEK

*‘In this chapter, where we see Abram portrayed at his most ideal, as the man of faith acting as king of land that was his by right, we see also the mysterious figure of Melchizedek **towering** over him. Although there is great blessing to be found in Abram, here is one who is even greater than Abram.’*

(Duguid, 46)

The enigmatic Melchizedek disappears from the Old Testament almost as soon as he appears - cited only elsewhere in Psalm 110:4 where it is predicted that the Messiah would also be a King-Priest like Melchizedek.

As King of Jerusalem (Ps 76:2) and Priest of the most high God, Melchizedek uniquely combined the offices of King and Priest and so foreshadows Christ who rules as King, yet intercedes for us as our High Priest.

Though it is speculative to say that Melchizedek was a pre-incarnate appearing of Christ, Hebrews 6:20-7:19 later reveals that he *foreshadows* or *resembles* (7:3) Christ in three further ways:

Firstly, his priesthood was not based on heredity but calling. Jesus similarly was not from the priestly tribe of Levi, but appointed priest by God himself. **Secondly**, his priesthood is eternal. Just as Melchizedek as a *literary* figure has no *reported* beginning or end in the Bible, Christ has no *actual* beginning or end. **Thirdly**, his priesthood is superior, just as Levi through ancestor Abram bowed to Melchizedek as God’s appointed mediator, so too do all bow to Christ as our mediator with God.

GETTING STARTED

1. Have you ever had an experience where something looked good on the surface, but the reality turned out to be much different? Share with the group your experience.

INTO THE TEXT

Read Genesis 13

2. Given his recent failing in Egypt, what is the significance of Abram re-tracing his steps back to Bethel? (cf. 13:3-4; 12:8)
3. How does Abram's gracious offer to Lot (v. 8-9) demonstrate growth in faith since his failing in Egypt?
4. What are indicators that Lot operates here not by faith, but by sight?
5. Read Proverbs 30:8-9. How can prosperity be as much a temptation to sin as adversity?

Read Genesis 14

6. If you were in Abram's shoes, would you have bailed-out your nephew? Why or why not?
7. In what ways do Abram's actions here foreshadow the redemptive work of Christ?
8. How does the mysterious King of Salem foreshadow Christ? Why did Abram give him a tithe? (cf. Hebrews 6:20-7:19)¹
9. In what way is Abram's response to the King of Sodom one of faith? (cf. Heb 11:25)

TAKEAWAY

10. Reflect with the group on one of the following –
 - a. Lot shared the fate of the Sodomites. Where have you been in danger of over-acclimatising to the worldview or expectations of others in your family, workplace or community?
 - b. Has your prosperity impacted negatively upon your relationship with God?
11. Read Ephesians 1:3-10 together. Though we can't *see* these promises in all their fullness yet, what would it look like in the day to day if we were to walk by faith in light of them?

¹ Hebrews 6:20-7:19 is complex and worth a study in and of itself. Accordingly, don't feel the pressure to break it down in detail, rather simply familiarise yourself with its contents and see in general terms how the Melchizedek of Genesis 14 is a pointer to Christ.