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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Genesis 13.

(2016)

The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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Genesis 13.

Topics.

- Abram, Sarai and Lot leave Egypt and travel toward the Negeb.
- Abram journeyed from Negeb to where his tent had been at the beginning.
- Abram and Lot's possessions were so great they could not dwell together
- Lot chose all the Jordan valley and Abram settled in the land of Canaan.
- The LORD said to Abram, I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth.
- The glory of the spiritual temple God is building in Christ.
- Five lessons to learn from Abram's story.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

The previous chapter: in chapter eleven the focus was firstly, upon God's promise to give Abram the land of Canaan forever and make him a great nation and a blessing to all the families of the earth and secondly, upon Pharaoh taking Sarai into his house and God afflicting him and his house with plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife.

Abram, Sarai and Lot leave Egypt and Travel toward the Negeb.

Genesis 13:1 ----- ¹So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb.

Lot accompanied Abram into Egypt and comes with him out of it.

Negeb: is a desert region between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea to the south of Judea it was part of the original territory of the Amalekites (Num. 13:29) and refers to the desert region lying to the south of Judea. The physical characteristics of the Negeb are that of rolling hills which abruptly terminate in the desert region. It is bounded on the east by the Dead Sea; on the west by the Mediterranean Sea.

It is a land where the water supply is scarce, because of a very meager amount of rainfall in the summer months, but at other seasons of the year streams flow across its desert sands and the nomads use it for pasturage. In this territory Hagar encountered the angel when she fled from the face of her mistress Sarah (Gen 16:7 14) and it was here that both Isaac and Jacob dwelt (Gen 24:62) (Gen 37:1).

Many of David's exploits are described as happening in the Negeb, centering around Ziklag (1 Sam 27:5). After Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 586-585 B.C, a group of Jews retreated to the Negeb, where they were harassed by the Edomites who sided with the Babylonians.

In the previous chapter: Abram told the Pharaoh of Egypt that Sarai was his sister and when the Pharaoh saw the beauty of Sarai he took her into his house intending to lay with her. God seeing what was about to happen afflicted the king's house with plagues.

Pharaoh was made aware that Sarai was Abram's wife (maybe after seeing the people, being afflicted with the plagues she told him the truth). Pharaoh had no intention of harming or killing Abram, but sends him away and orders his men not to hurt him in anyway. Now in this chapter we pick up the story of Abram, Sarai and Lot leaving Egypt and travelling toward the Negeb.

Abram Journeyed from Negeb to where His Tent had been at the Beginning.

Genesis 13:2-4 ----- ²Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. ³And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai; ⁴to the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

Ai: is 10 miles NNE of Jerusalem, however alternative sites have been suggested, because it is possible there was a second Ai in Transjordan (Jer. 49:3). The people of Ai are called Amorites (Joshua 7:2, 7). Joshua conquered Ai (Josh 7:12) and after the seventy year Babylonian captivity of the Jews Bethel and Ai returned to Judea (Ezra 2:28) (Neh. 7:32).

Bethel: (Bethuel or Bethul) was originally called Luz (Gen. 28:19) (Gen. 35:6). It is in the land of Canaan and was here that God told Jacob to build an altar. (Gen. 35:1, 14-15). It is also an unknown town allotted to Simeon.

Abram's great riches: (v2) consist in cattle and flocks which was the chief form of wealth in the East and precious metals such as silver and gold.

Bethel the place where his tent had been at the beginning: (v3) Abram travels to the place at Bethel where he had first built an altar, it is possible he built an entirely new altar, but more likely that he rebuilt the one that he had first built since it is very likely it had fallen down, especially if it was made of earth (Exod. 20:24), or he had taken it down so it would not be used by idolatrous Canaanites or perhaps they themselves may have destroyed it.

However what is important here is not whether it was a renovation of the first altar or a new altar, but that that it was an altar to honour God and a place where Abram called on the name of the LORD as he had done previously and experienced meeting with God. It is also likely that while there he revived his faith and renewing his vows.

Abram and Lot's Possessions were so Great they could not Dwell Together

Genesis 13:5-9 ----- ⁵And Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents, ⁶so that the land could not support both of them dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together, ⁷and 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. ⁸Then Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. ⁹Is 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."

Up to now Lot has been with Abram in all his journeys, but since Lot and Abram had both gathered an abundance of cattle, flocks and possessions, there was contention between the herdsmen.

Added to this since the Canaanites and the Perizzites were still dwelling in the land there was not enough land in the region they possessed at that time to support both Abram and Lot and their households cattle, flocks and possessions therefore they decide to peaceably part company. Abram, the chosen of the LORD allows Lot to survey the land and have first choice.

The fact Abram was willing to let Lot have first choice, being fully aware that he would choose the best and most fertile land reveals the graciousness and love Abram had toward Lot and his family and that now that he was back in the Promised Land he had renewed his faith and trust in the LORD to provide and protect him.

Lot chose all the Jordan Valley and Abram Settled in the Land of Canaan.

Genesis 13:10-12 ---- ¹⁰And 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.) ¹¹So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley,

and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other. ¹²Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley (in the cities of the plain in KJV) and moved his tent as far as Sodom.

It seems that Lot's prime motivation for choosing the Jordan Valley was because it had rich fertile soil and was well watered which meant his cattle and flocks would flourish in contrast to living in the desert regions where water was scarce. From a worldly point of view this would be considered a very wise choice. It is almost certain Lot was basically a good man (especially since God went to so much trouble to save him from the destruction of the cities) (Gen. 19) and was at this stage choosing what was best for his cattle and flocks which would in turn be best for his families' well-being.

The statement, "Lot settled among the cities of the valley (in the cities of the plain in KJV) and moved his tent as far as Sodom," (v12) seem to imply that Lot had not yet moved to live within the city walls, but pitched his tents in the neighbourhood of the cities for his family, his servants, his shepherds and his herdsmen which reached to the city of Sodom.

This reasoning does make sense since the verse speaks of cities and not one city which were built on the plain of Jordan and Lot could not dwell in more than one city which implies that his first settlement was not in any city, but near them all (especially Sodom). However the following verses clearly show that Lot and his family at some stage did move into a house in the city of Sodom: -

- Two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth ²and said, "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the town square." ³But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. (Gen. 19:1-3).
- Then the two angels said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place so Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, "Up! Get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city." (Gen. 19:12-13).

Lot left his tent to live in the comfort of a house and to acquire an easier manner of living it is not a sin for a person to want to make their life easier and more comfortable. Lot's wrong-doing was that he chose to set himself and his family up in a city in which the inhabitants especially the men were grossly violent and evil against the LORD. Verse thirteen states: -

- Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD. (Gen. 13:13).

In Ezekiel is written: -

- The guilt of Sodom was pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but she did not aid the poor and needy. (Ezek. 16:49) (See also Gen.19).

Though it is not a sin to live in a city it is foolishness to willingly choose to live in a place that is hostile to God, hostile toward His people and extremely wicked, corrupt and violent.

It is interesting to notice: their country and fields were as the garden of the LORD and yet all the fertility and beauty of the landscape and the superabundance of the luxuries did not halt the sinfulness of the inhabitants. They were an abundantly prosperous people yet their moral corruption continued to increase into greater villainy of lust, and blatant defiance of heaven.

Abram settled in the land of Canaan: (v12) the plain of Jordan and cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were in the land of Canaan so the expression, "Abram settled in the land of Canaan," means he settled in that part of the land that was particularly called Canaan because it was the region where the Canaanites were dwelling. When Canaan is spoken of in a general sense it encompasses the plain of Jordan and cities of Sodom and Gomorrah since they are all in the land of Canaan.

The LORD said to Abram, I will Make Your Offspring as the Dust of the Earth.

Genesis 13:13-18 ---- ¹³Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD. ¹⁴The 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, ¹⁵for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. ¹⁶I 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. ¹⁷Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you." ¹⁸So 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.

Sodom: was most likely at the east and south east of the Dead Sea in Jordan in the land of Canaan (the exact location is unknown). Sodom and Gomorrah became symbols of wickedness and of God's judgment. The men of Sodom were: -

- Wicked and great sinners against the LORD. (Gen. 13:13).
- Not ashamed of their sins, but proclaimed them in the open. (Isaiah 3:9).
- Committed adultery walked in lies and full of pride (i.e., arrogant, self-important, egotistic and felt superior to others. (Jer. 23:14) (Ezek. 16:49).
- Strengthened the hands of evildoers and did not turn from their evil. (Jer. 23:14).
- Had an excess of food, were prosperous and at ease, yet they did nothing to help the poor and needy. (Ezek. 16:49).
- Indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desires. (Jude 1:7).

I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth: (v16) it is important to understand that this promise to Abraham to make his offspring as the dust of the earth so that they cannot be counted embraces New Testament Christians in Christ.

This is because the promised offspring (seed in KJV) of Abraham (and David) is Christ and all the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore the promise is not limited to Israel only, but extend and embrace all those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is because God is now creating one new nation in Christ made up of both Jews and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew). This means that Jews and Gentiles become one new nation in Christ (also called a new man in Christ, a new creation in Christ, the church, the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God).

The Apostle Paul said: -

- Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹²remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the *COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL* and *STRANGERS* to the *COVENANTS* of *PROMISE*, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both *ONE* and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself *ONE NEW MAN* (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in *ONE BODY* through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles). ¹⁷And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews). ¹⁸For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in *ONE SPIRIT* to the Father. ¹⁹So then you (Gentiles) are *NO LONGER* strangers and aliens, but you are *FELLOW CITIZENS* with the *SAINTS* (the Jews) and members of the *HOUSEHOLD* of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being

the cornerstone ²¹in whom the *WHOLE STRUCTURE* being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a *DWELLING PLACE* for *GOD* by the Spirit (Ephes. 2:11-22).

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles).

In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world.

The practical application of what this means to those who belong to Christ is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to them. The book of Revelation states: -

- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that: -

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

The glory of the spiritual temple God is building in Christ: Jews and Gentiles are being united together as one body in Christ to be a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Believing Jews and Gentiles are being prepared by the prophets and apostles teachings and by the influence of Christ and the Holy Spirit to become a majestic and glorious sacred temple in which God dwells for all eternity.

When this majestic building is completed there will be nothing so worthy of reverence since God dwells in it; so ancient since the patriarchs and prophets laboured in building it; so solid since love cements it together; so closely united and indivisible since Christ is the corner stone; so exalted since it reaches as high as heaven and to God himself; so full of wisdom since its specifications are the word of God; so full of light since the Holy Spirit dispels every dark corner; so spacious since it is spread over the whole earth; so invincible and indestructible since it is being built by God, by Christ, by the Holy Spirit and by the influence of God's eternal word; so divine since it is a living, vibrant, dynamic temple inhabited by the Holy Spirit, and so universal since all its unique stones though spread throughout the world are compacted together in Christ.

God is the master builder of this majestic and glorious temple; Christ is the corner stone; faithful believers are the proper materials; the prophets and apostles are its foundation and the Gospel and love its pillars. Christ is the door and faith is the entrance into it. It is a spiritual building and through, faith and grace this living building is growing into an eternal house fit for the most Holy God to dwell in.

It's beauty and radiance will surpass all temples that have ever gone before it since it will be adorned with a vast variety of rich colour made up of Jews and Gentiles of every age, country, sex, and condition: the mightiest of kings, the most renowned lawgivers, the most profound philosophers, the most eminent scholars and all those of whom the world was not worthy have formed this building, (taken from the beautiful writings of a faithful, but unknown brother in Christ).

Peter wrote: -

- Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame (1 Pet. 2:6).

Every faithful brother and sister in Christ are represented as living stones that God is using to build this spiritual, majestic temple of eternal glory which will be manifested in splendour for all to see when: -

- The Lord himself descends from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ are raised then we who are alive are caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:15-18).

Abram obeys the voice of heaven. He moves his tent from the northern camp, where he had parted with Lot, and camps by the oaks of Mamre, (the name of an Amorite sheik). Abram remains in the open country as a stranger, and shepherd of flocks and herds.

The oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron: (v18) are named after Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner who were allies of Abram. It was with the consent of these Amorites, and by virtue of the treaty entered into with them, that Abram made this group of oaks one of his resting places, but not for any religious or superstitious reason as the heathens used such a place for, but because they formed a shady and pleasant spot to dwell and rest under. The following verse shows that Mamre the Amorite was a friend and confederate of Abram: -

- 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. (Genesis. 14:13).

Sarah was buried east of Mamre: -

- Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Mach-pelah east of Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. (Gen. 23:19).

The oaks, (also translated the plains of Mamre) are in Hebron which is a town and a place about twenty miles south of Jerusalem on the way to Beersheba.

Hebron: in the land of Canaan was first called Kirjath Arbab, but, in the times of Moses called Hebron (Gen. 23:2). It was also named the city of Arba, (the name of a great man among the Anakim), but after being taken by Caleb it became again called Hebron. (Josh. 15:13-14). Its variety of name refers to the variety of its masters, at first to a Shemite and afterwards most likely an Amorites, a Hittite (Gen. 23), an Anakim, then Judah and the Muslims. It is now called el-Khulil (a title of Abram meaning the friend of God).

Hebron is exalted by Jews, Christians, and Muslims for its association with Abraham and is also viewed as the second most holy city by Jews and Muslims because it contains the burial site of the biblical Patriarchs and Matriarchs within the cave of Machpelah. Jerusalem is of course the city considered the most holy amongst Jews, Christians and Muslims. Today Hebron has a mostly Sunni Muslim population with some Jews and a handful of Christians. The Palestinians have control of about eighty percent of the city while Israel has twenty percent. To help monitor the situation international observers patrol the city.

The cave of Machpelah: though Israel in 1967 regained control of Hebron the Cave of Machpelah has remained under the authority of the Muslim Waqf (i.e., Religious Trust), which continues to restrict Jewish access. No visitors are allowed inside during Muslim prayer times, Fridays or Muslim holidays.

At Hebron Abram built an altar to the LORD: (v18) here in the land of Hebron by the oaks of Mamre Abram built an altar as a sign of thankfulness and gratitude for the renewal of the promise that the LORD would give to him and his offspring the land of Canaan.

Five lessons to learn from Abram's story: -

1. No one is free from sinful dysfunctions and aberrations, not even the called of God and the most faithful as Abram was. We are all flawed in some way and though we maybe able to hid these flaws most of the time, they are often

revealed in times of struggle, danger and fear as they were with Abram. Only in heaven will we find true purity and perfection this is why the Lord Jesus Christ gave his life on the bloodstained cross of Calvary, not so that we could attain to the perfection and holiness of God, but because we cannot, if it was possible for us to attain to the glorious state of a sin-free life Christ died for no reason.

2. When we sacrifice peace and fellowship with our family, friends and neighbours, because of our faith God, (meaning they reject us or God calls us to missionary work) He will abundantly make up our loss with His love and inner spiritual peace. Our family and friends may reject us, but God will not.
3. The promises of God and inward spiritual gifts that come through faith are far richer than the outward things our eyes see around us. God calls us as He called Abram to walk through life not fixing our mind upon worldly things, but rather setting it upon God's eternal promise of a better Canaan to come.
4. Abram built an altar as a token of his thankfulness to God. When God meets us with His love, His grace and His promises, we like Abram should meet Him with heartfelt worship and humble praises.
5. When facing outward difficulties we should help ourselves by meditating upon the glorious inheritance which the Lord has for the faithful when death delivers them from this mortal and corrupt world to eternal life and everlasting happiness.

End.