

Sent: Wednesday, November 7, 2018 2:30 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Genesis 13-14

"The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind! You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek!" (Psalm 110:4)

So what does this verse (our memory verse for this lesson)--and, specifically, a "priest" named "Melchizedek"--have to do with Genesis 13-14, you might ask. Lots! Stay tuned and we'll see an amazing, and vital, connection, I believe, not only to this lesson but to the total Bible!

Genesis 13 begins with Abram, along with Sarai and Lot, returning to the Land of Canaan--somewhat unceremoniously--after their "side tracked" journey into Egypt! He's actually returning "very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold," verse 2 says--but apparently also with a very large entourage of servants and staff (including an Egyptian maid of Sarai's, named Hagar), and lots of other "stuff" they managed to accumulate to this point! (You can get a better idea of the magnitude of Abram's wealth and domain when you see in Gen.14:14 that he was able to quickly assemble 318 "trained men, born in his house" when he went to war to rescue Lot! But that's getting ahead of our story!)

With all the stuff, however, Abram's still a wandering nomad with no land, and not even a descendant, to call his own--despite the promises of God!

Fortunately, Abram has enough sense (and spiritual insight) to return "from the Negev, as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there he called on the name of the Lord! Yea! The term "back to Bethel" has a certain ring to it, and has come to represent for many believers a special act of "re-dedication" and "re-commitment" to the Lord! And a journey we all need to take from time to time as believers!)

Whew! Abram appears back on track!

But then strife develops "between the herdsman of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock"! Verse 6 says "their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together!" (Apparently Lot had lots too!)

Here we see Abram taking the initiative, and exercising godly character (and faith in God), by allowing Lot to choose first whatever land on which he wanted to dwell! Abram would take second choice!

So Lot "saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord, like Egypt as you go to Zoar." The best land, he figured, and "so he chose it for himself!"

Well, you know the rest of the story! How "Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom--where the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinners against the Lord"!

Interestingly, it was only after Lot separated from Abram that the Lord appeared to him once again to renew His covenant, by promising to give all the land, as far as he could see, and walk on, to him--and his descendants (who would be as the dust of the ground which cannot be numbered)! How encouraging (and maybe baffling too!) this must have been for Abram! And he responded by "moving his tent...and dwelling by the oaks of Mamre which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord"! (Another one!) Wow!

All's well, right?

Ooops! Genesis 14 brings on what Steve Holley last nite called "the first world war"!

A powerful coalition of four Babylonian kings from Mesopotamia, under Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, and including Amraphel, king of Shinar (who many believe might have been Hammurabi who grew up in the same time and place as Abram!) attacked five kings of the city-states in the southern portion of Canaan--including the king of Sodom. Apparently to keep them under "subjugation" (as they had been for 12 years), and perhaps to keep the trade routes open between Mesopotamia and Egypt!

And wouldn't you know, Lot was "caught in the middle" and among those taken off captive! All of which spurred Abram--the "Hebrew" (term coined for the first time!)--to roust his 318 "trained men" and plot a plan to finally track down the cohorts, by night, in the area of Damascus! Ended up rescuing Lot and pulling off an amazing victory over much greater forces! (In retrospect, reminds us of the later story of Gideon, in Judges 6-8, and how God called him to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Midianites--using but 300 men, against an army of 135,000 Midianites, with pitchers, torches, and trumpets!)

It's only after Abram's great victory that the mysterious Melchizedek enters the picture! Who is he?

According to Genesis 14:18-19, he's the "king of Salem" (which is the "king of peace"), and a "priest of the Most High God" who brought out bread and wine and "blessed Abram of God Most High, Possessor (Creator) of heaven and earth...and blessed God Most High who delivered Abram's enemies into his hand"! His superior status as "king-priest" is recognized by Abram by his acceptance of Melchizedek's blessing and by his offering to him of a tithe. His name later would show up in Psalm 110 where he is connected with the One who is invited to "sit on the right hand of the Father" (obviously Jesus Christ) and is identified as "the priest forever after the order of Melchizedek"!

He's an important figure spoken of in the book of Hebrews (which we studied two years ago) and is presented as being "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually" (Hebrews 7:3) He's the one and only one who could fit the person of Jesus, as a priest, the One who would become "the source of our salvation"--when He offered up Himself "once for all," as the supreme sacrifice for sin!

Melchizedek was certainly the "picture" or "type," if not the very Person of Christ (in pre-incarnate form as a "theophany") when He appeared to Abraham to bless him--interestingly just outside the city of Salem, which would one day be called Jerusalem!

What a great privilege for Abram to be confronted, and ministered to, and blessed by Melchizedek, giving affirmation to his calling and putting a big stamp on God's promises!

And so our text, Genesis 13-14, leaves us with some very important lesson applications: we once again are reminded of, and alerted to, the criticality of making the right choices as believers--as we contrast the decisions made, and character demonstrated, between Abram and Lot! And we are challenged to recognize that our Most High God, Creator of heaven and earth, is sovereign, and that all the blessings in our lives flow from Him!

But we also learned a little bit more about the mystery of a "king-priest" named Melchizedek who appeared to bless Abram (and whose name I hope we all can now spell and maybe even pronounce!) who pictures and personifies Jesus Christ--and who shows up in the Old Testament, only to remind us of God's redemptive plan right from the beginning!

Hebrews, which specializes in all things Melchizedekan, gives us an appropriate closing thought: "Therefore, since we have a great high priest, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need!" (Heb. 4:14-16)

Lots of stuff!

Go with the God of Abraham and Jesus Christ, a "priest forever after the order of Melchizedek"!

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