

LESSON 16: God Chose, Called, and Guided Abram; LOT chose the Fertile Plains of Sodom and Gomorrah

Would you leave behind everything that is familiar to you—your friends, your family members, your job and follow a god whose voice you'd never heard before and just go without knowing where you were going? Well, that's exactly what Abraham did, and that's why the Bible calls him the father of faithful. The call of Abram was similar in its demands to that of marriage. Abram was, so to speak, to "leave and to cleave" – he was to leave his family and his homeland, and to cleave to God, by faith.

You see, the concept of family meant everything to a person living in the time of Abraham. In that time, family units were strongly knit; it was unheard of for family members to live hundreds of miles apart from each other. Unlike today where we are extremely mobile and have family and friends scattered all over the country and different parts of the world, in Abram's day, to leave one's family was to leave one's significance and security. To be among your family members was a "safety net" of protection. To be removed from one's family was to destine one to powerlessness and poverty. By commanding Abram to leave his homeland and family, he was forcing him to depend solely upon himself.

We have no biblical evidence that Abraham even knew God or worshipped him as the True God, yet somehow, by God's providence, Abraham knew and recognized the call of Yahweh, the Lord, and he obeyed willingly and without hesitation. Abraham is the subject of our study today, and he is referenced 230 times in the Old and New Testament. Abraham is the founding father of the Jewish nation of Israel, and if you have faith in Yahweh, the Lord God, then, he is your father as well.

Here's what **Hebrews 11:8-10 (GW)** says:

⁸ Faith led Abraham to obey when God called him to go to a place that he would receive as an inheritance. Abraham left his own country without knowing where he was going.

⁹ Faith led Abraham to live as a foreigner in the country that God had promised him. He lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who received the same promise from God.

¹⁰ Abraham was waiting for the city that God had designed and built, the city with permanent foundations.

Before we continue, let's review last week's lesson on God remembering Noah and his family as well as dealing with the rebellious people who were building the Tower of Babel.

Questions for Review from Lesson 15:

1. Why would God give Noah and his sons control over all the animals, birds, and fish? **Because the world and everything in it belongs to God.**
2. What sign did God give to show that He would never again destroy the earth by a flood? **The rainbow.**
3. Has God kept His promise? **Yes, God is true to His Word. He never lies, and He never changes.**
4. Did the generation following the flood know the truth about God? **Yes.**

5. How did they know?
 - a. The truth about God the Creator and His judgment by the flood was told from one generation to the next.
 - b. They could see that there was an almighty Creator, by the things which God had made: the sun, moon, stars and all the things on the earth were proof that God was their Almighty Creator.
6. Did the descendants of Noah all worship God? Did they agree with what He said and trust in His promise to send the Deliverer? **No, only a few believed and worshiped God.**
7. What did the majority of the people do?
 - a. They deliberately turned away from what they knew was the truth and followed the lies of Satan.
 - b. They worshiped idols made like people, birds, animals, and reptiles. They also worshiped the sun, moon, and stars.
8. Who were these people? **They were the descendants of Adam and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, so they were our ancestors.**
9. Why did they begin to build the tower of Babel?
 - a. So that they would not be scattered all over the world as God had commanded.
 - b. So that they would be greatly exalted on the earth.
10. Did God know what they were planning to do? **Yes.**
11. Does God know all the secrets which people have? **Yes, He knows them all.**
12. What did the Lord do? **He gave different languages to different families so that they could no longer understand one another.**
13. What was the result? **The various families separated from one another and moved to different places.**
14. Where did our earliest ancestors get their religious beliefs? **From Satan and also from their own ideas when they deliberately turned from the truth about God.**

A. Introduction

How many of you know the name of your great-great-grandfather? Not many of us know the names of our ancestors, but today we are going to talk about a man who lived about 4,000 years ago and is still remembered by his descendants. Why is he remembered?

- He is remembered because of God's promises to him.
- He is remembered because he believed God.
- He is remembered because he is the father of all those who have faith in Yahweh, the one true God.

B. Abram was a descendant of Shem.

Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth; Abram was a descendant of Shem.

Abram, the son of Terah, lived close to where the people had begun to build the great tower of Babel.

POINT TO BABEL ON MAP 1.

READ Genesis 11:27-30 (GW)

²⁷ This is the account of Terah and his descendants. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran was the father of Lot.

²⁸ While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, his native land.

²⁹ Both Abram and Nahor married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, daughter of Haran. (Haran was the father of Milcah and Iscah.)

³⁰ Sarai was not able to have children.

(POINT TO ABRAHAM, SARAH, AND LOT ON THE CHRONOLOGICAL CHART.)

Later on in their story, we will see Abram's and Sarai's names change. Abram married Sarai, but Abram and Sarai didn't have any children.

Note: In those days, the inability to have children was considered to be a disgrace. Couples who had no children were looked down upon by society. Male children were most desirable so that a man might have heirs to carry on his family name.

READ Genesis 11:31-32 (GW)

³¹ Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot (son of Haran), and his daughter-in-law Sarai, wife of his son Abram. They set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. When they came as far as Haran, they stayed there. ³² Terah lived 205 years and died in Haran.

Terah, Abram's father, moved from Ur and traveled up to Haran.

- Terah took Abram and Sarai with him.
- He also took his grandson, Lot, because Lot's father had died in Ur.
- Terah planned to go into Canaan, but they only got as far as Haran, where Terah died.
- The call of God to Abram in Gen. 12:1-3 is really his second call.

(Point to picture-slide of Abraham's journey)

C. God called and commanded Abram.

Theme: God is faithful; He never changes.

READ Genesis 12:1-2 (GW)

¹ The LORD said to Abram, "Leave your land, your relatives, and your father's home. Go to the land that I will show you.

² I will make you a great nation, I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

Theme: God communicates with man.

- God called Abram to leave his own country and go into the land of Canaan.
- God spoke directly to Abram and told him what he was to do; the Bible was not yet written in Abram's day.
- He speaks to us through His written Word, the Bible.

- Clearly implied in the promise of [Genesis 12:2](#) is that of prosperity. God promised to “bless” Abram, and to “make his name great.”

Theme: Man is a sinner. He needs God and is helpless to save himself.

Where Abram lived in Mesopotamia, the people worshiped idols--They did not trust, love, or obey God, their Creator.

Joshua 24:2 tells us that Abram’s father, Terah, was an idolater.

- Was Abram also a sinner? Yes, he, too, was a descendant of Adam. But Abraham believed God.
- He came to God in God’s revealed way.
- He trusted in God and His promises.

Theme: God is supreme and sovereign.

- God’s plan for Abram could not be achieved while Abram was living among his idolatrous countrymen.
- He must leave his homeland.
- He must go to the country to which God promised He would guide him.

God had the right to tell Abram what to do.

- God is greater than all.
- He is supreme.

D. God’s promises to Abram

Theme: God is loving, merciful, and gracious. **Theme:** God is faithful; He never changes.

Our ancestors, the descendants of Noah, had deliberately turned away from God and the truth.

- They worshiped the things which God had created instead of God, their Creator.
- They rebelled against Him by beginning to build the tower of Babel.

In spite of all their sinfulness, however, God did not abandon His plan to rescue mankind from Satan’s power and everlasting punishment.

- No one and nothing can stop God from carrying out His plans.

Consider: Whatever God promises to do, He does. Whatever God begins, He brings to a conclusion. Nothing can keep God from carrying out His plans and accomplishing His purposes.

- Calling Abram was God’s next step in His plan to deliver men from their bondage to sin.
- God is still the same today as He was in the days of Abram.
- He is still loving, merciful, and gracious.

- He has not forgotten His plan to save people from everlasting punishment.
- He wants everyone to be saved from Satan's power and from sin.

Let's read God's promises to Abram.

READ Genesis 12:2 (GW)

² I will make you a great nation, I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

Galatians 3:8 (GW)

⁸ Scripture saw ahead of time that God would give his approval to non-Jewish people who have faith. So Scripture announced the Good News to Abraham ahead of time when it said, "Through you all the people of the world will be blessed."

-Even though Abram and Sarai did not have any children, God promised Abram that he would become the father of a great nation.

- God also promised that He would protect and prosper Abram so that he would become an important man and that, through him, others would also receive great benefit and help.

READ Genesis 12:3 (GW)

³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse. Through you every family on earth will be blessed."

- God also promised that He would prosper those who helped Abram, but He would bring evil on anyone who treated Abram wrongly.

Let's take a closer look at the end of verse 3: " --Through you every family on earth will be blessed."

This is the greatest of all the promises given to Abram, because it is about the Deliverer.

Do you remember our studying that, in the Garden of Eden, God promised He would send a Deliverer into the world to crush the power of Satan?

God now promised that one of Abram's descendants would be that Deliverer. All families of the earth would be blessed through Abram's descendant.

- That promise includes you and your family and me and my family and all of the other families and all people in the world.
- The Deliverer whom God promised to send was for all people in every part of the world.

E. Abram believed and obeyed God.

Theme: Man must have faith in order to please God and be saved.

Abram's environment and circumstances:

- Remember that Abram was living in a very idolatrous, sinful world and came from a family that did not worship God.
- Abram, like Noah, was surrounded by men and women who scorned God and followed after their own evil desires.
- Abram and Sarai were childless. In spite of his environment and his circumstances, Abram believed God's promises.
- Abram believed that God would send the Deliverer and that the Deliverer would be one of his descendants.
- Abram, like Noah, believed God's Word, and for that reason, he obeyed God.

READ Genesis 12:4-5 (GW)

⁴ So Abram left, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran.

⁵ Abram set out for Canaan. He took along his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the possessions they had accumulated and the servants they had acquired in Haran.

ON MAP 1, POINT TO UR, HARAN, AND CANAAN, SHOWING THE PROBABLE ROUTE OF ABRAM'S JOURNEY.

Consider: Let's keep in mind as we study the story of Abram that he was a real person in history, one who is mentioned many times throughout the Old and New Testament.

Archeological discoveries at Ur, Mari, Ebla and other ancient sites agree with the details in the Bible concerning life in Abram's time, that is, about 2,000 B.C. Recently, many new details have come to light about travel and trade, marriage and family, and even common names which agree with the biblical account.

(Suggested Visual: Ur of Chaldees)

Consider: Abram was very rich and had many servants, cattle, sheep, and goats. He took all that he owned with him. It is impossible for us to appreciate everything that was involved in such a journey, but we need to think about the fact that Abram's decision to follow God was not a mere whim or desire for adventure. Abram made the decision to go because Abram believed God.

Can you imagine "pulling up stakes" and taking off across the land with all your family and possessions and heading for a strange country—all in obedience to the God whom your neighbors scoffed at? Remember, Abram was a man of wealth and standing. People were watching him.

The city Abram had left earlier, Ur of the Chaldees, was an urban center with houses and temples similar to those at Babel. The remains of the city of Ur can be seen in the country of Iraq today.

But now Abram had to travel and live in tents. In spite of inconvenience and social pressures, Abram believed God and obeyed Him, trusting all his family and possessions and reputation into God's care. Abraham realized that God was totally worthy of his trust.

Lot, Abram's nephew, also went with Abram and Sarai. Lot also believed God and trusted in His promises.

Theme: God is faithful; He never changes.

The Lord faithfully guided Abram to Canaan, the land that He had promised to give to him.

F. Trouble between Lot's and Abram's herdsmen

READ **Genesis 13:5-7 (GW)**

⁵ Lot, who had been traveling with Abram, also had his own sheep, cattle, and tents.

⁶ There wasn't enough pastureland for both of them. They had so many possessions that they were unable to remain together.

⁷ Quarrels broke out between Abram's herders and Lot's herders. (Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in that area.)

Lot, Abram's nephew, was also rich like his uncle.

Because they both had many sheep and cattle, it wasn't long before trouble developed between the men taking care of their herds and flocks.

G. Abram's solution

Abram had a solution which he proposed to Lot.

READ **Genesis 13:8-9 (GW)**

⁸ Abram said to Lot, "Please, let's not have any more quarrels between us or between our herders. After all, we're relatives.

⁹ Isn't all this land yours also? Let's separate. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right, and if you go to the right, I'll go to the left."

H. Lot's choice

READ **Genesis 13:10-11 (GW)**

¹⁰ Then Lot looked in the direction of Zoar as far as he could see. He saw that the whole Jordan Plain was well-watered like the LORD'S garden or like Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)

¹¹ Lot chose the whole Jordan Plain for himself. He moved toward the east. They each went their own way.

Lot looked around to make his choice; he chose the grassy plain which he thought would be best for his animals. I'm sure Lot walked away from that conversation with Abram with a broad smile on his face. But in so doing, he overlooked several important factors. First, he has chosen to go east (13:11).

Second, he has chosen to dwell in the city of Sodom, a wicked place.

Third, he has neglected to act consistently with the Abrahamic Covenant. God promised to bless all those who blessed Abram and to curse those who cursed him. To take advantage of Abram by choosing the best land was not blessing Abram.

You see, even though Lot believed and trusted in God, he wasn't thinking of what was the best thing for him and his family and how this move would affect their knowledge of God or their ability to please Him.

Consider:

Remember Cain's foolish decision to ignore God? All of his descendants were drowned in the flood.

We need to be careful of the choices we make. In our society, we are continually pressured to make choices about things that really have no eternal value:

- How can we make more money?
- What shall we buy?
- Where will we go?
- What will we do tomorrow?
- What about vacation?

But the real issues of life are seldom mentioned: What about our relationship to God? What do our children know about God?

- What has God written for us in His Word?
- What about the penalty for our sins?

Read Proverbs 14:12 (GW)

¹² There is a way that seems right to a person, but eventually it ends in death.

If a person chooses to turn away from learning what God has written for him in the Bible, that person will regret it forever. We do not want to face the fact that God has prepared a place of punishment for all who turn against Him. Satan does not want us to think about it! But the Lake of Fire is a real place where Satan and all his demons and everyone who refuses God will spend eternity. What good will it do us to own everything in the world if we die and go to Hell?

No one wants to talk about these things. We are continually urged to have more things and to think less about God. But God calls to us through His Word—pleads with us—to listen to Him and to believe Him.

Theme: Man is a sinner. He needs God and is helpless to save himself.

-Compare: Abram stayed up in the rocky, less fertile hills and mountains. Lot moved down to the fertile plain. In the eyes of men, it would seem that Abram was the “loser” in this division of territory.

But God knows the truth which we cannot see on the surface of things.

READ Genesis 13:12-13 (GW)

¹² Abram lived in Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain, moving his tents as far as Sodom.

¹³ (The people who lived in Sodom were very wicked. They committed terrible sins against the LORD.)

Down on the plains, there were two cities, Sodom and Gomorrah.

- These cities were very wicked.
- The people who lived there didn't want to know about God or what He wanted them to do.
- They were only thinking of themselves and of the evil things they were doing.

God knew this and would have told Lot if he had asked. But instead, Lot just chose what seemed to look the best to him, and in doing so he took a tragic step away from God and into a terribly dangerous place of great evil.

Theme: God is everywhere all the time; He knows everything.

Even though the people of Sodom and Gomorrah weren't thinking about God, He saw all they did.

- He was their Creator.
- He rightfully owned them, even though they were following Satan.

-Consider: Although people ignore God and refuse to listen to His message, He still knows all about them. They may choose to reject God and follow Satan, but they still rightfully belong to God. He will judge and punish them when He decides that He has given them enough time to change their minds and agree with Him.

Abraham is told to walk throughout the land, to take a good look at all that will be his. As he travels to these places, he symbolically claims this land as his own. He will not possess it in his lifetime, but his descendants will. Abraham then moves his tents near to the oaks of Mamre, and there he builds yet another altar to the Lord (verse 18).

I. Abraham to the Rescue

Lot found himself caught in the middle of a power struggle between the king of Sodom and his allies and an alliance of opposing kings. The king of Sodom suffered defeat, and the invading forces made off with many spoils of war, which included many of the people and possessions of Sodom, including Lot. When word reached Abram, he went after the victors with 318 of his servants (14:14) and his allies (14:24).

They prevailed over the four kings and retrieved all the people and possessions that had been taken as spoils, including Lot. Abram seems to be viewed as the "commander" of these forces (see 14:15), and the king of Sodom is determined to honor him for his victory. He intends to meet Abram and the others in the king's valley (verse 17), with what seems to be the counterpart of a tickertape parade. Before the king of Sodom reaches Abram, Melchizedek appears, as it were, out of nowhere.

J. Abraham meets Melchizedek, the Mysterious Priest-King

While Abraham is heading home after rescuing his nephew Lot, he is met by a very mysterious man, whose name is Melchizedek, and who is both the priest and king of the nearby city of Salem which is present-day Jerusalem which means "City of Peace". Without a word, this "priest-king" who is called

a “priest of the Most High God” (verse 18) arrives on the scene with bread and wine, and blesses Abram with these words,

“Blessed be Abram by the Most High God,
Creator of heaven and earth.
20 Worthy of praise is the Most High God,
who delivered your enemies into your hand” ([Genesis 14:19b-20a](#)).

In response, Abraham gives Melchizedek a tenth of all he had gained in the battle when saving Lot. And that’s it. End of story. But this is the first instance of tithing where Abraham without being asked freely offers Melchizedek a tenth of his spoils from battle.

So who is this shadowy figure and what on earth is going on?

Later passages in the Hebrew Bible equate Melchizedek with God’s promise to Israel that He would one day establish an eternal priesthood. Melchizedek is similar to the coming Deliverer or Messiah who similarly initiates a feast involving bread and wine called the Lord’s Supper or Eucharist, and who is presented as both a king and a priest, offering the ultimate sacrifice of his life for the sins of the world.

Melchizedek is priest and king of Salem, or present-day Jerusalem, where both the king and priest of Israel will reside and one-day, the Messiah, the Deliverer will establish his throne, his eternal reign in Jerusalem.

K. Conclusion

Lot made a choice based on selfish desires. But Abram obeyed God because he believed that God would do all He had promised. Abram is told to walk throughout the land, to take a good look at all that will be his. As he travels to these places, he symbolically claims this land as his own. He will not possess it in his lifetime, but his descendants will.

In our next lesson, we will consider further how God worked in the lives of Abraham and Lot.

Let’s think about our own lives and our choices, too, in light of what we’re learning about God.

QUESTIONS for REVIEW:

1. Did God abandon His plan to send a Deliverer for mankind because they rebelled against God and built the tower of Babel? **No.**
2. What did God do to ensure that the Deliverer would be born into the world? **God chose and called Abram to be the ancestor of the Deliverer.**
3. What did God tell Abram to do? **God told him to leave his own country and go to the place to which God promised to lead him.**

4. How many children did Abram and Sarai have when God told Abram to go into a different country? **They didn't have any children.**
5. What did God promise Abram?
- a. **God said that Abram's descendants would become a great nation.**
 - b. **God promised that He would protect and prosper Abram so that he would become an important man, and through him others would receive great help and benefit.**
 - c. **God said He would prosper those who helped Abram, but He would bring evil on anyone who treated Abram wrongly.**
 - d. **God also said that all of the nations and tribes in the world would receive God's help through one certain descendant of Abram.**
6. Who would this descendant of Abram be? **He would be the Deliverer, the one who would overcome Satan and make it possible for people to be in oneness with God.**
7. God spoke directly to Abram, but how does God speak to people today? **Through the Bible.**
8. Did God choose Abram because Abram wasn't a sinner? **No, all people are sinners.**
9. How did Abram come to God to worship Him? **He came the same way Abel, Seth, and Noah had come. They came the way God had told them.**
10. What did Abram do when God gave him the promises? **He believed God. He left his own country and went where God guided him.**
11. What similarities do you see in Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, and Abram? **They believed God and came to God in the way God asked them to come; they obeyed God.**
12. Why did Lot move away from Abram and live down on the plain near to Sodom and Gomorrah?
- a. **Abram and Lot had so many animals that there wasn't sufficient grass and room for them to live together.**
 - b. **Lot moved to the plain because it was well-watered and had much more grass for his animals.**
13. What benefit will riches be to people if, when they die, they go to everlasting punishment? **Their riches will not be of any benefit to them at all.**
14. Who saw the wicked things the people of Sodom and Gomorrah did? **God did.**
15. After Abraham defeats the four kings and rescues Lot, he is met by whom? **Melchizedek.**
16. Who is the mysterious person known as Melchizedek? **The priest-king of Salem, which is our present-day Jerusalem.**

17. What does Melchizedek do? **He blesses Abraham.**

18. And what does Abraham do in return? **He offers up a tithe of all the spoils from winning the battle against the four kings.**

19. Why is Melchizedek important? **Because he is a type of the coming Messiah who will be a priest-king and will reign and rule the world from Jerusalem**

Next Lesson 17: *God Destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah; God Renews His Promises to Abraham*