

Abram Lived in the Land of Canaan, While Lot Pitched His Tents Near Sodom

13: 1-13

DIG: In forsaking rich cities and choosing less fertile land, what does this reveal about Abram (see Hebrews 11:8-16)? What subtle, but slippery, slope of sin do you see in the lifestyle of Lot? What was the difference between Abram and Lot concerning wealth? How different is their testimony?

REFLECT: If faced with a similar choice, would you have followed Abram or Lot? Why? Have you ever had the same five-step progression in your life? What are you looking at? What are you choosing to do? Where have you pitched your tent? Does the LORD want you to separate from something or someone?

So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him even though he was not mentioned in the previous chapter (13:1).

Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold (13:2). This is the first mention of **wealth** in the Bible. A careful study of the Scriptures shows that there is no sin in being **wealthy** as long as the **wealth** was gained honorably, regarded as belonging to **the LORD**, and used with a sense of stewardship. But as so often happens, human nature gets in the way, and relatives quarrel about money. This will be the case here.

From the Negev desert he went from place to place until he came to the more productive hill country of Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier (13:3). He returned to the very place he had left. Evidently he felt the need to return, confess his sins and seek full restoration from **the LORD**, where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of **ADONAI** (13:4). This is where he had begun public worship and here he renews his commitment to **Elohim** after his failure in **Egypt**. Because **God** promises to forgive us our sins when we confess them (**First John 1:9**), Abram was restored and once again enjoyed full fellowship with **God**.

Lot, on the other hand, is seen as slowly drifting away from **the LORD**. Some people always seem to take the path of least resistance. It is not that **Lot** was evil; he simply seemed to be adrift without a moral anchor. He lived life on the edge, and like so many of us, he eventually lost his way. When faced with hard decisions, he acted selfishly and, in some cases, indecisively (19:6-10).²⁴⁰

Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram also had flocks and herds and tents (13:5). He was not as wealthy as Abram, but he did have his own possessions. Lot was being blessed because of his relationship to Abram. But this led to conflict in the midst of the LORD's blessings.

But the Land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions gained in Egypt were so great that they were not able to stay together (13:6). The land of Canaan had a limited number of water sources as well as limited grazing areas. It is not surprising, then, that the needs of Abram and Lot soon outgrew the available resources. As always, competing needs led to conflict.²⁴¹

And quarreling arose between Abram's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The rabbis teach that the quarrel arose because Lot's herdsmen led their flocks into pastures belonging to Abram. On being confronted by Abram's herdsmen, they answered that God had promised the land to Abram, and since he had no children, Lot was his heir. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time (13:7). This was the key reason for the crowded conditions. But the saddest thing about this, of course, was that this was a bad testimony to the Canaanites and Perizzites around them, just as they had already compromised their testimony to the Egyptians.²⁴²

Abram had learned that ADONAI would take care of his needs no matter where he was, so he took the initiative to bring peace to the situation. So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers" (13:8). Lot was his nephew, the son of Abram's brother Haran, but it was time to separate.

Being the oldest Abram should have had the first choice, but he graciously said to Lot, "Is not the whole land before you?" It is a rhetorical question, with the obvious answer of yes. "Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left" (13:9). Abram was indifferent to what Lot would choose because Abram was well aware of the LORD's promises to him (12:2-3). But this was not an empty gesture on his part, nor is it an empty gesture on our part when we are generous to those in the world because we know the promises of God on our behalf! Both men were wealthy and had material possessions, but there was a difference between the two of them. On the one hand, Abram had wealth, but the wealth did not have Abram. On the other hand, Lot had wealth, but the wealth had Lot.

Lot looked up and *saw* the plain that would be his ruin. The apostle John tells us that the lust of the eyes comes not from the Father but from the world; therefore, we should not love the world or anything in the world (First John 2:15-16). When Eve *saw* the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it (3:6). It was through the *eyes* that Achan sinned. He said: When I *saw* in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them (Joshua 7:20-21). Far too often what our *eyes see* gets us into trouble. But the LORD wants us to *listen* to Him. So trust comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through a word proclaimed about the Messiah (Romans 10:17 CJB).

Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of Eden, or the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, toward the delta region of Zoar. The garden of Eden had four rivers running through it. Today this land is not well watered. It is a dry thirsty, salty desert. But Lot was looking at it before ADONAI destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (13:10). This is a foreshadowing of what is to come.

So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. Abram was looking forward to the city with foundations whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10), while Lot chose for himself a city built by man, that would be destroyed by God (19:24). Abram was thinking about what was best for Lot, but Lot was thinking about what was best for himself and his love for worldly things (First John 2:15-17). From there, the two men parted company (13:11).

Abram lived in the land of Canaan where his opportunities for grazing his flocks and herds was limited, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom (13:12). Lot's material blessing became a moral decay. This was the great mistake of Lot's life, from which he would continually suffer. He walked away from the blessings he had enjoyed while he associated with Abram (12:3).

This section closes with the divine evaluation of Sodom. Now Lot did not know that the men of Sodom were wicked and probably would not have chosen the territory if he had known.²⁴³ But he would soon find out. The Hebrew word for wicked here is *raim* and describes external wickedness. This is similar to the time of Noah. The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time (6:5). Just as their wickedness would have to be destroyed by the Flood, the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah would also have to be wiped out because they were sinning greatly against ADONAI (13:13). They **knew that He was God but deliberately rebelled against Him**. As in the Flood account, one person, Noah, and one family was spared; here also, one person, Lot, and one family will be

spared as well. At this point, there is no indication that **Lot** is aware of how **wicked the men of Sodom** were. This sets the stage for the events of **Chapter 14**, and the **wickedness of Sodom** and **Gomorraah** will set the stage for **Chapters 18** and **19**.

When any of us **sin**, we **sin greatly against ADONAI**. When **King David** stole the virtue of **Bathsheba**, the life of **Uriah**, and the lives of many soldiers; **he** destroyed the honor of the country and the dignity of **his throne (Second Samuel 11:1-27)**. Yet when **he** repents in **Psalm 51:1** and **4** **he** says: **Have mercy on me, O God; for against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight**. Although **David** obviously had sinned **against** others, ultimately, **he** had sinned **greatly against the LORD**. You and I cannot **sin** any other way. When we **sin**, we all **sin greatly against Him**. We need to think about that.

But before leaving this section, let us look at **Lot's five-step progression into ruin**. First, **he looked toward Sodom (13:10)**. Secondly, **he chose the area of Sodom (13:11)**. Thirdly, **he pitched his tents near Sodom (13:12)**. Fourthly, **he lived in Sodom (14:11-12)**. Lastly, **he sat in the gateway of the city (19:1)**, meaning **he** became a citizen and elder of the city. **Lot** was a **righteous man (Second Peter 2:7)**, but once **he** began to understand the sinful ways of **Sodom**, **he** thought it would not affect him. **He** thought **he** could swim in the toilet and come up smelling like a rose. But **sin** always takes you further than you want to go, and costs you more than you want to pay, and **he** paid dearly. **When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me."** For **God** cannot be tempted by evil, nor does **He** tempt anyone; but one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death (**James 1:13-15**).