

Abram, Lot, and Melchizedek Gen. 13-14

The events in these two chapters have a very large impact in the New Testament, primarily because of Melchizedek. Chapter Thirteen described the events that led to Lot move to Sodom, and explained why he was there. Chapter Fourteen gives an historical account of a battle between nine kings (*four kings against five*—Gen. 14:9). Although these are interesting events, it is Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek that received an entire Psalm and an entire chapter in Hebrews.

The account begins with the statement of fact that the combined wealth of Abram and Lot are now too much for them to remain together any longer.

Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. 7 And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land. Gen. 13:6-7

Abraham's generosity and unselfish nature were clearly set forth in the choice he gave to Lot. Especially since God had promised the land to him. Yet Abram gave Lot the first choice.

So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left." Gen. 13:8-9

Abraham was willing to give up whatever was necessary to keep peace. Since they were brethren, Abraham thought peace was more important than goods or rights.

Lot's choice was based solely upon the beauty and value of the pasture lands necessary to feed his flocks. The final words reveal something sinister about the land where he would sojourn. We don't know when Lot found out. If he knew before and chose it anyway then it reveals a sad blight in his character. Yet when he found out later, he could have left that land and moved elsewhere. When it was all finished, this choice cost Lot all his possessions, his wife and whatever moral purity his daughters might have possessed up to that point in their sojourning with Abram.

And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. 11 Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other. 12 Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom. 13 But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord. Gen. 13:10-13

God reaffirmed His covenant with Abram.

After Lot left, the LORD (Jehovah), again appeared to him and promised he would receive the land and that his descendants would be many.

And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are — northward, southward, eastward, and westward; 15 for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. 16 And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. 17 Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you." Gen. 13:14-17

Before leaving this chapter, there is one final important statement made about Abram.

*Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and **built an altar there to the Lord.** Gen. 13:18*

This was not the first time it is mentioned that Abram built an altar. He used this altar "to call on the name of LORD (Jehovah)." Whether this altar was used for sacrifices for sin, or as worship is not clearly revealed.

*6 Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. ... And there **he built an altar to the Lord**, who had appeared to him. 8 And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he **built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.** Gen. 12:6-8*

*And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 4 **to the place of the altar which he had made there at first.** And **there Abram called on the name of the Lord.** Gen. 13:3-4*

Clearly Abram was a devout man who placed his relationship with God on the highest level.

Lot is taken in Battle

Lot chose to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. For twelve years the five kings in the region of Sodom had been subjugated and had served Chedorlaomer but for reasons the Scriptures do not reveal, these five kings believed they had the power to throw off the yoke. While most scholars (ISBE; McKlinton & Strong) believe that Shinar is near the region of Babylon, they have never really pinpointed the exact place. At this time in history most of these kings were kings of cities and not of nations (in Joshua, Israel defeats the king of Jericho and the king of Ai (a small city), Josh 7:2-3; 8:1).

In the battle, the five kings in the region of Sodom were defeated and their possessions taken. That would have been the end of the story, except Abram's nephew, Lot and all his possessions, were also captured.

Abraham Rescued Lot

Abram has been in the land long enough to have made friends and gained allies. With his own trained servants and these allies, they pursue after five kings traveling hundreds of miles to a point above Damascus.

Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they were allies with Abram. 14 Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. 15 He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. Gen 14:13-16

They are victorious and manage to recapture all the people, possessions along with Lot and his possessions. At Abram's return, only the king of Sodom is mentioned as coming out to meet them. He is so pleased at the return of his people that he offered all the spoil to Abram. Abram then revealed a vow or promise he had made to God.

Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself." 22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich' — 24 except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion." Gen 14:21-24

Abram had promised he would take nothing from the king of Sodom because he knew his character and wickedness. He did not want the king of Sodom boasting about being the one responsible for Abram's wealth. Yet although Abram did that for himself, he did not keep those who went with him from receiving their own portion.

Conclusion

These are important historical details, and they reveal God's providential care of Abram, as well as Abram's bravery, generosity, and concern for the needs of his God and his family. But the most important event in all that is recorded are the words regarding Abram and Melchizedek.

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. 19 And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all. Gen 14:18-20

Melchizedek - King of Salem, Priest of God Most High

Reading through the book of Genesis, we can consider these words, and ponder them carefully. Abram meets a priest of God who is also the king of Salem. This is the first time we read of a priest in the Bible. There have been many speculations regarding this man and his role. Some have located Salem as the later Jerusalem, but there is not enough information to say that with certainty. At this point we would be ready to move on with more questions than answers, but God decided to use Melchizedek and his role with Abram as an illustration of Jesus' relationship in His kingdom. Melchizedek was first a king and secondly a priest.

Ps 110

It is David himself who was inspired to write the words of this Psalm that elevated the events

surrounding Melchizedek and Abram to Messiah and his kingdom.

The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool. 2 The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! 3 Your people shall be volunteers In the day of Your power; In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth. 4 The Lord has sworn And will not relent, You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek. Ps 110:1-4

Before commenting on the Psalm, we need to get some important context.

After a long day of debating in which the Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and Lawyers were all brought to silence, Jesus finally asked them a question.

*15 Then the **Pharisees** went and plotted how they might entangle **Him in His talk**. ... 18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "**Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?**" 23 **The same day the Sadducees**, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and **asked Him**, ... 34 **But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together**. 35 **Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him**, and saying, ... 41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, **Jesus asked them**, 42 saying, "**What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?**" They said to Him, "**The Son of David.**" 43 He said to them, "**How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying: 44 'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool'?" 45 If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?**" 46 **And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.** Mt 22:15,18, 23, 34-35; 41-46*

From this discussion several important conclusions must be drawn. First, Jesus Himself revealed that this Psalm was written by David. Second, it revealed the very thing the enemies of Jesus did not want to admit. That the Christ must be divine in order for him to be higher than his father David.

Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. 34 "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, 35 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" 36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts 2:33-37

The first part of the Psalm was written directly about deity of the coming Messiah. He would be exalted to the right hand of God as Lord and Christ. The second part of the Psalm described the special order of Melchizedek.

The Lord has sworn And will not relent, You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.

While the Psalm introduced this priesthood of Melchizedek as an order and revealed that this was a decision God felt so strongly about He swore with an oath it would happen. If all we had was the passage in Genesis and this Psalm, we would still struggle for the meaning, but one of the stronger rebukes in Scripture was reserved for those Hebrew Christians who did not understand this point.

For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. 3 Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. 4 And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You." 6 As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek" Heb 6:1-6

The Order of Aaron vs the Order of Melchizedek

First, this is a complicated subject that is going to take some effort to understand. While the writings in Genesis seem clear enough, it was elevated to a far higher realm when God swore to make the Christ a High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, 10 called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek," 11 of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. Heb 5:9-12

There are some very important and deep spiritual truths to be learned from the passage in Genesis

and Ps 110. But they are not simple truths lying on the surface. Instead they are truths that will require deep thinking and reasoning. The Spirit returned to the order of Melchizedek in the eighth chapter of Hebrews.

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," 3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. 4 Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. Heb 7:1-4

First, the order of Melchizedek allows a man to be both a priest and a king and second, this priesthood does not require a genealogy as the order of Aaron. The Spirit here reveals that this position as revealed in Genesis made Melchizedek "like the son of God." Finally the Spirit wanted it clearly understood that the fact that Abraham gave a tenth of Melchizedek and that it was Melchizedek who blessed Abraham revealed that he was a greater person in God's eternal purpose than Abraham.

but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7 Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. 8 Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives Heb 7:6-8

Perfection in the Order of Melchizedek

The fact that God spoke of another order clearly implied that there was something flawed with the levitical order and specifically the order of Aaron.

Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? 12 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. 13 For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. 15 And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest 16 who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. 17 For He testifies: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek." Heb 7:11-17

Jesus is a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, sitting on the right hand of the throne of God as both King of kings, Lord of lords. As he ascended to the throne of God (*sit on my right hand*), He also took the responsibility of being a priest and taking care of the sins for the people.

Made a Priest with an Oath

Because the Christ was made a priest with an oath from God, there is a greater assurance to us that God will save us from our sins because he has given us a better covenant.

And inasmuch as He was not made priest without an oath 21 (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: "The Lord has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek"), 22 by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. Heb 8:20-22

A Priest Forever

The final point made by the Spirit in Hebrews is the great comfort we should receive because Jesus was a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. There is no death, no interruption of the blessings, the possibility that the new priest won't be faithful like the old. He can save to the uttermost as he is perfected forever more.

Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. 24 But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. 26 For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever. Heb 7:23-28