

GENESIS

F O U N D A T I O N S

Chapter 14 & 15 Study Guide

May 9, 2004

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Genesis 14

1. Background, Culture & Exegesis

In this chapter, we see the first mention of a war. Bottom line, Lot is taken captive and Abraham organizes his trained army of 318 people to get Lot back. In verse 13 we have Abraham referred to as the Hebrew (for the first time) and remember that title simply means to "cross over". More on that later!

It appears by the text that we have a night battle and that it was in Dan, which would be about 140 miles from Abraham's home in Hebron. We also see that Abraham and his mini-army pursued them all the way to Hobah, which is another 100 miles north of Dan! Now that's commitment!

This chapter also introduces us to an interesting guy named Melchizedek. Here's what we know about him:

- * King of Salem
- * Priest of the most High God
- * He receives tithes from Abraham
- * He has no recorded birth or death
- * He gives Abraham bread and wine

By receiving the tithe he establishes himself as the only person Abraham recognized as a spiritual superior. Many scholars for these reasons mentioned see that as a theophany, which is an Old Testament appearance of Jesus Christ!

One final note in this chapter is that Abraham refused the spoil or booty the King of Sodom offered him. Why? Because of his integrity and character! (see verse 23)

Small group Questions

Where else do we see bread and wine offered?

What does it mean to be a "Hebrew" to you?

2. Theme & Authorship

Themes

A couple predominate themes are found in Genesis. First is fact that this is a Book of Beginnings, the great introduction to the drama of redemption.

Second, we see God preparing a people – here we have God choosing and then testing. Whether it is Abraham, Isaac, Jacob or Noah for that matter God chooses



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and then begins to winnow and purge. Remember the goal is to create a people who would fulfill Genesis 3:15. It will be here that the initial step will be taken for man's redemption by a divine covenant made with a chosen race whose early history is here portrayed.

Author – Moses / **Date** - 1450 – 1410 BC

3. Theology

This chapter introduces us to one of the most puzzling mysteries of the Bible. In this chapter, after a great battle, the King of Salem, Melchizedek met Abraham and the Bible refers to him as the priest of God Most High, and then Abraham tithes to him. There are a lot of questions here, first of all, who is Melchizedek? Where did he come from? How is he a priest of God Most High? Who is he related to? The Bible mentions him only a couple more times. Once in Psalms David speaks of Christ prophetically and says that Jesus will be high priest in the order of Melchizedek. Then in Hebrews, several times Jesus is said to be appointed by God to be the High Priest in the order of Melchizedek. So who is this guy that he is so highly thought of by the foremost biblical leaders? The answer is no one really knows. He is probably the most enigmatic figure in the whole Bible narrative. We don't really know where he came from, other than that he was the King of Salem and we have no idea how he came to know God. He is one of the great mysteries of the Bible.

4. Prophecies of Christ

Melchizedek: A type of Christ

Gen 14:18-20

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said:

*"Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand"*

And he gave him a tithe of all.

Melchizedek's name is made up of two words meaning "king" and "righteous." Melchizedek was also a priest. Melchizedek foreshadows Christ as a righteous king/priest. We are told that Melchizedek was the king of "Salem," a word that means *peace*. These point forward to Christ as the King of peace.



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Some say that Melchizedek was an angel who took on human form during the time of Abraham. Others say he was a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. (But Melchizedek is described as being *like* the Son of God, not as *being* the Son of God himself).

The book of Hebrews clearly communicates the high priestly work of the Lord Jesus. To communicate that Jesus was the High priest caused some serious problems. The Jews expected their king to come from the tribe of Judah. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah. But the priestly tribe was to come through that of Aaron who was from the tribe of Levi.

The author of Hebrews is reminding us that there is another priesthood in the OT, that of Melchizedek, where there is no communication given as to his birthplace or heritage. This is not to say that he did not have parents, This simply means that none of that information was given in the Genesis account, and quite possibly omitted in order to stress the fact of the divine nature of the Messiah.

- From whom is the role of high priest selected from according to Hebrew 5:1?
- According to Hebrews 7:3 what reference is made regarding the *Son of God*?
- What argument might be made in reference to 7:3?
- Since Abraham paid tithe to Melchizedek, this reveals the fact that he regarded himself to be less than Melchizedek. The comparison is made in Hebrew that Melchizedek is of a higher order than Levi. Therefore, what does that tell us about Jesus' priesthood?

Soul Winner, So What

If the one who collects the tithe is greater than the one who pays it, what does your lifestyle (giving and otherwise) reveal about His greatness to you?

5. Attributes of God

1. No matter the circumstances, God is bigger than anything you may encounter. (**Genesis 14:8-17**)
2. God blesses those who are faithful; Abram had 318 trained soldiers, which is proof of the prosperity of Abram. (**Genesis 14:14**)
3. God is the source of our blessings. (**Genesis 14:20**)

6. Geography

Continuing from chapter thirteen of Genesis, when fourteen opens, we are still located in the region near the south end of the Dead Sea (also known as the Valley of Siddim in our Bible's). However, we see our first real mention of Jerusalem where in verse 18 it is called Salem (Psalm 76:2). The King's Valley (vs. 17) is near Jerusalem



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(2 Samuel 18:18), and the priest Melchizedek appears as the founder of the royal priesthood in an ancient Jerusalemite Psalm (Psalms 110:4).

In-Depth: What implications does this early reference to Jerusalem have in our theology? Politics? The answer is both easy and complex. Jerusalem is obviously a very important city to God. From Genesis to Revelation it is the central city in the central land of God's people. Even in New Testament writings it remains a hub of activity and the city of origin for the church. Politically, we have to always acknowledge (depending on your view God and Israel) that Jerusalem and Israel are at least central to history and the Bible. Countries and people have fought over this land since the time of Genesis.

Soul Winner, So What

Can anything but a spiritual answer explain the prominence of Israel in history?

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Genesis 15

I. BACKGROUND, CULTURE & EXEGESIS

Now after the rescue and blessing God is going to formalize his covenant with Abraham. But before we look at that process there are a few things to note.

First, in verse 1, we have the first mention in the entire Bible of “the word of the Lord”.

In verse two we are introduced to Abram’s “right hand man” – Eliezer of Damascus. In chapters to come we will find an interesting play on words concerning his name – let me give you a hint ... Eliezer means “comforter” – stay tuned!

In this chapter we see a bit more of Abraham’s faith – keep in mind he is now 85 and God keeps talking to him about his heir. Verse 6 is the high mark for Abraham ... “And he believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness.” This foundational truth is repeated three different times in the New Testament (Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6 and James 2:23) – this shows that righteousness is reckoned in return for faith. And our brother Abraham becomes the “father of faith” because he believes God.

From verses 9-12 we have the covenant ceremony but note that it is unilateral (Abraham is in a deep sleep and does nothing to help God) thus making it unconditional.

This process of dividing an animal is also alluded to in Jeremiah 34:18-19.

Now we have this prophecy of 400 years of bondage. Interestingly Israel was in Egypt for 430 years, but were afflicted for 400 years and they returned in the 4th generation (see Exodus 6:16-26).

Finally, note that there are at least seven words or phrases that appear in this chapter for the first time in scripture: we’ve mentioned –the word or the Lord (v1), the following are also first mentions: “fear not” (v1); “reward” (v1); “heir and inherit” (vv3,7); “believe, counted, righteousness (all in v6). This chapter shows us that there can be no heirship without sonship (Romans 8:16-17); no righteousness without faith (Romans 4:3); no assurances without promises and no blessing without suffering!

It had to be dark outside before Abraham could see the stars.

One last note – the land covenant mentioned in vs 17 – 21 mention a river as a border. Today the phrase West bank is used often to describe the one of Israel’s



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border but according to this passage it's not suppose to be the Jordan River it is suppose to be the Euphrates!

Small group Question:

- 1) Abraham is the father of faith because he believed without seeing –what are you believing God for?
- 2) Define the word covenant.
- 3) What is the difference between an unconditional and a conditional covenant

2. THEME & AUTHORSHIP

Themes

A couple predominate themes are found in Genesis. First is fact that this is a Book of Beginnings, the great introduction to the drama of redemption.

Second, we see God preparing a people – here we have God choosing and then testing. Whether it is Abraham, Isaac, Jacob or Noah for that matter God chooses and then begins to winnow and purge. Remember the goal is to create a people who would fulfill Genesis 3:15. It will be here that the initial step will be taken for man's redemption by a divine covenant made with a chosen race whose early history is here portrayed.

Author – Moses / **Date** - 1450 – 1410 BC

3. Theology

Chapter 15 is another defining moment in the life of Abraham and the people of Israel. In the previous chapter, God had instructed Abraham to join in the battle against the King of Sodom and in victory not to take anything that was owned by the evil king. Abraham was obedient and God was very pleased with his servant. We see in chapter 15 that God rewards Abraham for his obedience by making two major promises to him. The first is made in response to Abraham's plea for a child. In verse 1 God identifies himself as Abraham's "shield" and his "great reward". Abraham questions God though saying, "O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me? Since I have no child and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus." Abraham essentially says, But God what could you possibly give me that would be a blessing considering the situation I am in? How many times have you heard from God about a direction in your life or a decision he wants you to make and you say "but God..." God has told us his promises, his desires for our life and yet we make up excuses as if God can't overcome them. God responds to Abraham in verses 4 and 5, by telling him that not only will he have an heir from his own body but that his descendents will be more numerous than the stars in the sky. Then God does him one better by making a promise to him that God will give this nation a land to call its



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own. When reading the Old Testament, we you have to remember that it cannot be separated from two things, a people and a land. God's promise to Abraham was to create a people and deliver to them a land. We see at the end of this chapter that God promises Abraham the land between the Nile and the Euphrates Rivers. You know what's interesting about this? The Euphrates river runs straight down the middle of the country of Iraq. God promised Israel the land from eastern Egypt to Western Iraq and Syria. This may be a foretelling of things to come.

4. WORD STUDIES

Gen 15:6 "accounted" – "...And He accounted it to Him for righteousness"

Gen 15:6 Abraham believed the Lord, and he accounted or credited it to him as righteousness, a very prominent verse throughout the Bible. Gal 3:6-8 teaches us that like Abraham our standing before God is wholly dependent on faith. We cannot win a place in heaven by good deeds-nether did he.

5. PROPHECIES OF CHRIST – GOSPEL COMPONENT

Genesis 15:6

And he believed in the LORD; and He accounted it to him as righteousness.

We will continue to see that Christ as *the angel of the LORD* was very active among His people in Old Testament times. He provided for those in need, comforted the suffering, guided believers in the will of God, and enjoyed fellowship with those who walked in obedience to His will.

We will also continue to see the life changing power of God through His encounters with those that He called. Through a personal encounter with the living God of the Old Testament, we see that Abram became a man of faith. The fact that Abraham *believed* proves that he was saved by grace through *faith*. It was not his faith alone that saved him, but the substance of His faith, Jesus Christ.

To be *justified* is to be *declared free from blame*. According to Romans 4:1-4, what is it that Paul is declaring? Note the quotation he uses in verse 3. Is *faith* here considered a meritorious work? Read Romans 4:5-8 and define what faith IS and IS NOT attributed to. According to Luke 5:32:

- What is the *call* of Jesus?
- What therefore is the *sign* of one who truly believes?



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According to Hebrews 11:8-10; 13 "These all died in faith... but "... did not receive the promises..." What promise is referred to here? Now look at Hebrews 11:39, 40 and define what "both groups" are described as being *made perfect* by.

Soul Winner, So What

If Abraham was saved apart from works, what ought we be telling those in our lives who say that they are "trying their best" before God?

6. Attributes of God

God protects us-

¹ After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. **I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.**"

God Himself is our reward-

¹ After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. **I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.**"

God's blessings are more than we can count-

⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars **if you are able to number them.**" And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

God accounts us righteous when we believe-

⁶ And he believed in the LORD, and **He accounted it to him for righteousness.**

God allows us to go through seasons without His blessings-

¹³ Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and **they will afflict them four hundred years.**

God will deliver His people-

¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; **afterward they shall come out with great possessions.**

God blesses individuals even when He allows His people to be afflicted-

¹⁵ Now **as for you**, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.

God repeats His covenants-

¹⁸ On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying:

"To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates--

7. BIBLE DIFFICULTIES / PROBLEM PASSAGES



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What was the purpose of cutting the animals in half?

One of the practices of a serious covenant between 2 men involved, the pledging parties walking between the halved animals. This affirmed their covenant and by doing so they agreed if it was broken the same would happen to them.

Soul Winner, So What

- However don't get caught up with the rituals, and miss the reason for the covenant. God promised Abram a son from his wife, and that his descendants would too numerous to count v.4-6. Through Abrams eyes, there was no evidence and the window of opportunity was closing quickly. God said it, I believe it, that settles it. Ever heard that? Well, that's a false statement. If God said it, that settles it, and our belief will only determine whether we go Gods way or the hard way. So whether you believe it or not doesn't change GOD. **"For my ways are not your ways, and my thoughts are not your thoughts, for just as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways" says the Lord (IS. 55:8,9).** The greatest plan you have for your life, God has something better. Not your words, but your actions will be the litmus test of your belief. 'T SEE the evidence he didn't believe.

