

In the Beginning, God...

The Thread of Redemption

Genesis 13:18 (ESV) 18 So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.

Introduction

God raises a man in the eyes of others, to fulfill His purpose in the life of that man.

Psalms 75:4–7 (ESV) 4 I say to the boastful, ‘Do not boast,’ and to the wicked, ‘Do not lift up your horn; 5 do not lift up your horn on high, or speak with haughty neck.’ ” 6 For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, 7 but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another.

Abram has now journeyed into the land that God would show him, he is gaining wealth, yet his status is considered that of a wanderer even a barbarian - literally *‘one from beyond’*.

Genesis 14:13 (ESV) 13 Then one who had escaped came and told Abram **the Hebrew**, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner. These were allies of Abram.

So how does a wanderer, a nomad gain the respect and the authority to claim land, strike deals and be considered an equal with members of other societies and cultures?

You allow God to do the speaking for you.

- Hidden with the narrative of Abram is this story of conflict, alliance and honor that brought about a change of heart for those meeting Abram it brought him into prominence in the pagan land in which he now lives.

Before we arrive there we must first deal with the nephew, Lot - the one who took rather than waited to be given.

1. A Contrast in Choice

God's honor is never placed upon the proud, the greedy or the arrogant, it always waits for the humble to be revealed.

Abram now gives his nephew a great opportunity to prove his heart and show humility. Lot fails by making a self-seeking, self-gratifying choice.

Genesis 13:8–11 (ESV) 8 Then Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left.”

Their wealth and herds have grown, and both men have more than the area they are living in can support. So

Abram gives up his right to the best of the land. The right was his by position and age but he trusted God.

Selfishness is always a symptom of unbelief. It is a mark of covetousness that will not be satiated unless it gets what it wants. Lot rather than waiting on Abram, rather than giving Abram the choice, made his choice immediately based solely on what he saw. Abram humble and patient awaits the Lord's instruction, before moving or choosing.

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. (This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) 11 So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other.

This sets the stage for the elevation of Abram and it demonstrates God's sovereign ability to accomplish His will regardless of where His men are.

This moment of decision reveals more than a preference for land—it reveals the heart condition of each man. And that leads us to our next point: their contrast in character.

2. A Contrast in Character

Genesis 13:12–13 (ESV) 12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. 13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the Lord.

Looking on from the outside, anyone seeing the situation would say that Abram had made the wrong decision, Lot definitely got the better deal. But this was where God had led him and he believed the Word of the Lord.

But God gives us the real picture. Lot is now living among men who are wicked and great sinners against the Lord. One man goes in search of great wealth, while the other, content with God's provision, chooses worship.

Genesis 13:14–18 (ESV) 14 The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, 15 for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever.

16 I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted.

17 Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.” 18 So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.

God's promises are more sure than man's schemes.

Abram settles 22 miles south of Salem, a city that will figure greatly into the messianic narrative of Abram's story. It will be from Salem (Shalom/Peace) that Abram will meet the One promised to bless the nations. And the place he chooses to raise a new altar to the Lord, is Hebron, the place where a shepherd boy 600 years later will be anointed king of Israel by Samuel the prophet.

But this place isn't as well watered, fertile, like the garden of the Lord or Egypt. It was more desolate and yet Abram took this gift from the Lord with gratitude and love.

We look at land and evaluate its beauty and usefulness to us, just like Lot. Abram saw land that was not lovely, not desirable and loved it because it was a gift from God.

It reminds me of Eve in the garden; Genesis 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

No matter that which our eyes look upon, there is always a contrast of character in the choice we make. Do we choose that which pleases our flesh or that which pleases God? Do we go after what we want, or do we wait for the promise of God?

These choices reveal two very different hearts—one drawn toward the world's promise, the other toward God's presence. And that difference becomes most visible in the contrast of their consecration.

3. A Contrast in Consecration

Genesis 13:18 (ESV) 18So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.

Lot's eyes were fixed on the plains of Sodom — green, prosperous, full of promise — but Abram's heart was fixed on the presence of God.

The final contrast in this passage is where each man's devotion settled.

A. Lot Settled Among the Wicked

Lot “pitched his tent toward Sodom.”

He wanted position, prosperity, and prominence. Soon, he would be sitting at the gate (Genesis 19:1) — a place of civic power — yet far from God's presence.

Lot's life shows us what happens when worldly comfort replaces spiritual communion.

He lost his altar, his influence, and ultimately, almost everything he loved.

B. Abram Built an Altar Unto the Lord

Abram didn't just move his tent; he built an altar. That's a statement of priority.

Everywhere Abram went, he built altars — physical reminders that worship and obedience anchor the life of faith.

The altar symbolized:

Dependence — “God, I’m not here by my choosing, but by Yours.”

Devotion — “All I have and all I am belong to You.”

Direction — “Wherever I go, I will make this place holy ground.”

While Lot was building a reputation, Abram was building a relationship.

Hebron means fellowship or communion.

So while Lot’s life bent toward Sodom’s corruption,

Abram’s life bent toward Hebron’s communion.

And it is from that communion — not human striving — that God reaffirms His covenant:

“Lift up your eyes... all the land that you see I will give to you.” (vv. 14–15)

When Abram built an altar, God expanded his vision.

When Lot built a house, he began to lose his way.

The contrast between these two men is the same contrast that confronts every believer today: Will we live for what we can see—or for the One who sees all?

Conclusion - Choosing the Right Direction

From this simple yet profound story, we see how Genesis continues to reveal the beginning of everything we still face today. The same choices that confronted Abram and Lot still confront us.

Contrast:	Lot	Abram
Choice:	Chose by sight	Chose by faith
Character:	Driven by self	Directed by surrender
Consecration:	Settled in Sodom	Built an altar at Hebron

This passage doesn't just show two men dividing land—it shows two ways of life dividing paths.

Lot represents the way of sight, comfort, and compromise.

Abram represents the way of faith, surrender, and worship.

And from Abram's faith begins the Thread of Redemption—the line through which God will bring His covenant people and, ultimately, the Redeemer Himself, Jesus Christ.

Each altar Abram built pointed forward to the Cross, where God would provide the true Lamb once and for all. Each act of faith looked forward to the One who would one day pray, "Not my will, but Yours be done."

So the question for us tonight is simple but searching:
Are we pitching our tents toward Sodom—drawn by
what looks good?

Or are we building altars in Hebron—drawn by the God
who is good?

When all the plains of Sodom fade away, the altar of faith
will still stand.