



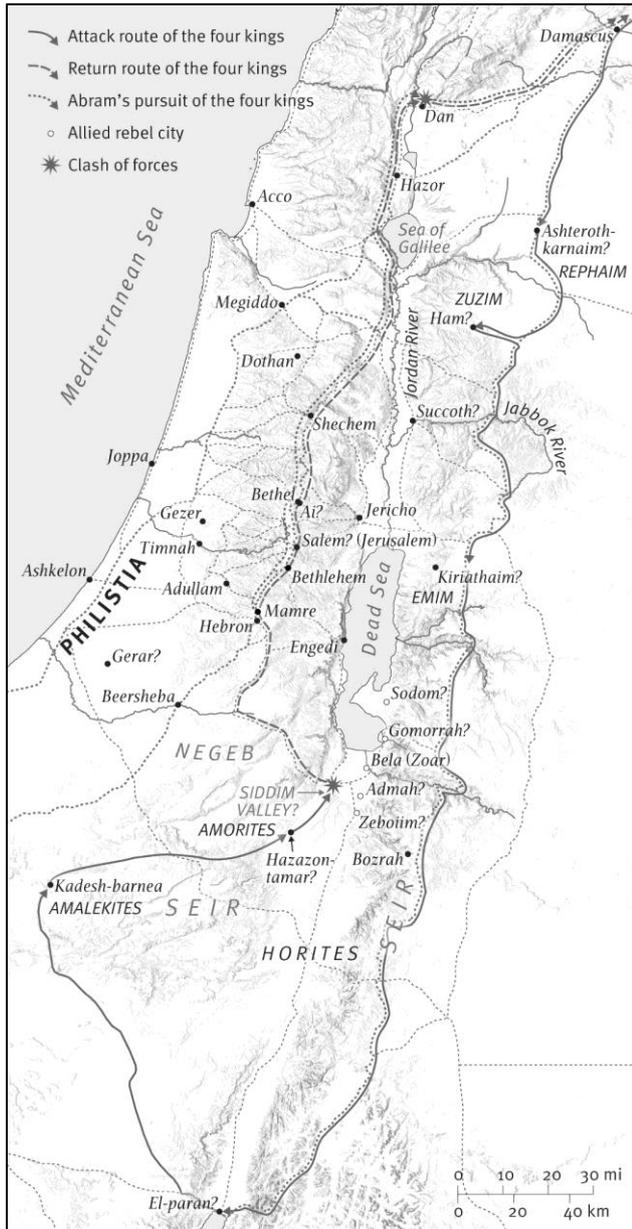
Lesson 10

Made Righteous by Faith

Introduction

In the last lesson we saw how Abram left Ur of the Chaldees and travelled to Canaan as God commanded him. God made great promises to him, especially one telling him he would inherit the land for ever.

Abram delivers Lot from Captivity (14:1-16)



We read in chapter 14 that there was an invasion of the land of Canaan by four kings with their armies (point 1 on the map opposite shows their route). One of the kings came from Ellasar, a town just 40km from Ur, the place which Abram had left to come to Canaan.

A great battle took place and the invading army captured Sodom and Gomorrah (point 2). Lot, his family and all his wealth were taken and the army set off to return back home. We can imagine how Lot felt. He had lost all he had worked for and was in danger of being taken back to the country he had left years before!

Abram learned of the capture of his nephew and set off after the invading army with a small company of his own servants. He ambushed the enemy at night and managed to drive them out of the land of Canaan (point 3).

When he returned, bringing with him Lot and all the people and their goods, he was met by the king of Sodom who went out to meet Abram (point 4). We know that the men of Sodom were very wicked (Genesis 13:13) and Abram refused to have anything to do with this man.

Abram Meets Melchizedek, the King Priest

Another king, Melchizedek the king of Salem, also came out to meet Abram. This king was completely different to the king of Sodom and all that he stood for. Melchizedek was not only a king but was also "the priest of the most high God" (14:18). Abram had refused the king of Sodom but acknowledged Melchizedek who had come to meet him, praising God for delivering Abram from his enemies.

In the New Testament book, 'The Letter to the Hebrews', we learn more about Melchizedek. Look at these points which are made in Hebrews chapters 5 to 7.

1. The name Melchizedek has a special meaning. It is made up of two Hebrew words and means 'King of Righteousness' (Hebrews 7:1-2).



2. We also read in Hebrews that Melchizedek was king of Salem and that Salem means 'peace'
3. Putting these two titles together we learn that this man was not only 'King of Righteousness' but also 'King of Peace' (Hebrews 7:1-2). He was like the Lord Jesus Christ whose reign will be one of righteousness and peace (Psalm 72:7).
4. Melchizedek acted as a priest for Abram. The Lord Jesus Christ is a priest in heaven at the right hand of God. He asks for forgiveness of sins for those disciples who believe in him and want to draw near to God through him (Hebrews 7:3; 10:21-22).

Abram refuses the King of Sodom's Goods (14:21-24)

After Abram had worshipped with Melchizedek, the king of Sodom tried to bargain with him.

"And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself."
Genesis 14:21

Abram's reply reveals his great faith in the living God.

"I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.'"
Genesis 14:22-23

Abram would not have anything from such a wicked man in his house and amongst his family even though it would have made him rich. This is a lesson for us, if we are true disciples then sometimes we have to make a choice between things which can make us wealthy in this life but which are spiritually very dangerous. In this we should remember not just the example of Abram but that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God gave Abram the victory and he was content to trust in Him. Since God was "*the possessor of heaven and earth*", as Abram acknowledged, then the king of Sodom could give him nothing that was not already God's.

Although Lot saw all this, he went back to his home in Sodom. He should have realised that to remain with Abram would have given him and his family security and peace and kept them in God's way.

Abram is promised a Descendant

Following this incident, which shows Abram's faith in God's care and protection, God appeared to him again saying: "*Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your reward will be very great*" (15:1).

Abram had declared to the king of Sodom his complete dependence upon God. Now God appeared in a vision and confirmed that He would indeed protect him (be his shield), and provide for him (be his very great reward).

However Abram had a question that puzzled him greatly—God had promised the land of Canaan to him and to his descendants, he was now an old man but still had no son. So he said to God: "*Behold, you have given me no offspring*".

In reply, God re-affirmed His promise of a son: "*your very own son shall be your heir*".

God brought Abram outside to stand under the starry sky and told him to look toward the heavens and count the stars. "*So shall your offspring be*", God said. He not only promised him a descendant but told him that his family would be very large - like the stars in number.

Abram's response to this is one of the most important verses in the Bible. It tells us what God asks of us so that He can forgive us our sins. We need to look carefully at it in 15:6.

"And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness."



The Blessing of Righteousness

'He believed the Lord'. Although Abram did not know how it would happen, he did not doubt that God would fulfil His word. Because they were very old, humanly speaking it was impossible for Abram and Sarai to have children, yet Abram believed what God had told him.

'He (God) counted it to him (Abram) as righteousness.' God accepted Abram's total belief in what He had told him – that Abram would have a descendant. Through this faith (belief and faith are the same thing) his sins could be forgiven and he would be made 'right with God' (this is what 'righteousness' means).

This is why faith in what God tells us is so important. Through our belief God can forgive **our** sins; if we have faith then we can share the blessing that God promised Abram.

“So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”
Galatians 3:9

This blessing is the promise of the forgiveness of our sins now through belief in Jesus Christ as our saviour and the promise of eternal life in God's kingdom when Jesus returns to the earth. Those who believe like Abram will be there with him; those who refuse to believe will be rejected by the Lord Jesus just as they rejected Jesus in their lives.

“I (Jesus) tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
Matthew 8:11-12

Notice that Jesus does not invite people to ascend into heaven. The kingdom of God will be on earth not in heaven. It is described by Matthew as the 'kingdom of heaven' because it will be a kingdom on earth in which God's purpose will be done as perfectly as it is done in heaven.

God's Covenant with Abram (15:9-20)

Abram had asked God about a descendant and the Lord had told him that he would certainly have a son. Abram next asked God about the land: *“O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?”* (15:8).

God's response was to make a covenant with Abram. A covenant is a formal, legal agreement between two parties in which both promise to do something for each other. Abram showed faith in God's word and so in return God made a solemn promise of the land of Canaan to Abram.

God spoke to Abram, telling him the details of the covenant. After his death his descendants would go into Egypt, be oppressed there and become slaves. But after many years they would return to the land God had promised them (v13-14). God was showing him that although the covenant would not be fulfilled in his lifetime, his descendants, the Jewish people, would return there and inhabit it. That absolute certainty of this is seen in God's final words to him.

“To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,”
Genesis 15:18 (NKJV)

These words in chapter 15 are the third of the seven promises God made to Abram and we can summarise them like this.

PROMISE 3

1. Even though he was very old, Abraham would have a son who would be his heir.
2. Through this son he would have many descendants.
3. God would give the land of Canaan (Israel) to these descendants.





SUMMARY

In this lesson we have learned the following key points.

- Lot's choice of Sodom as a place to live was disastrous and he lost everything. He did not put God first in this important decision about where he should live.
- Abram understood this principle and refused to have anything to do with the king of Sodom even though he would have become wealthy by doing it.
- Abram met Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God who blessed him. Abram believed what Melchizedek told him because he was sent by God.
- Abram believed that God would fulfil the promises God had made to him – so God counted him as righteous.
- God has made a solemn promise to give the land of Canaan (the land of Israel) to the Jews, the descendants of Abraham.
- God accepts people as being righteous if they believe in Him and the promises He has made to them.
- It is these people who will be in the Kingdom of God with Abram.

