

# OpenTheo

## Genesis 12:10 - 13:18



### Genesis - Steve Gregg

Abraham (then named Abram) faced a test of faith when he put himself and his wife in a compromising position by telling Egypt that Sarah was his sister to protect himself during a famine. Despite his struggle with faith, Abraham became a model for Christians and a prototype for disciples to follow. The text also emphasizes the importance of trusting in God even in challenging circumstances and highlights the evolution of Abraham's faith over the course of his relationship with God. The promise of land to Abram's descendants is considered a token of their inheritance of the whole earth through Christ, and the modern state of Israel is a secular state, not a religious one.

### Transcript

We left off right at the halfway point in Genesis 12, halfway through the chapter. At the beginning of the chapter we saw the first statement of the covenant that God made to Abram and the promises he made to him. We find Abram coming into the land.

And of course, at this point, he's named Abram. Abraham is the name that he later came to be known as in chapter 17. But Abram and his family and his servants have come into the land and they are going from place to place planting flags, building altars to Yahweh and worshipping Yahweh in this new pagan land, which has been promised to become Abram's land.

And it says in verse 10, Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land. And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance, therefore it will happen when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, this is his wife, and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say you are my sister, and it may be well with me for your sake, and I may live because of you.

Now, the famine in the land, there were famines frequently in the Middle East. And we find several of them in the book of Genesis. There's one in Abraham's day, there's one in Isaac's day, there's one in Jacob's day.

And in every case, the idea of going down to Egypt is a consideration. Abraham went down to Egypt, Isaac was told not to go down to Egypt, and Jacob did go down to Egypt with his sons in Genesis during famines. Now, why Egypt? Well, Egypt, of course, had the Nile.

And they had what would seem primitive to us today, but a technology at the time, they had pumps, that they actually were operated by foot. They had foot pumps that pumped water up out of the Nile and into the irrigation ditches, so that even when there were famines in other parts around, which normally were, of course, the result of drought. The rainfall was too irregular there, and so when there'd be a long drought, of course, the food wouldn't grow and you'd have a famine.

But Egypt almost always had food, because they had the river. Even if there was a drought of rain, they irrigated their land. And so there's always an abundance of food, and people typically went down to Egypt for food when there was a famine in the Middle East.

And so we find Abraham facing a famine and going down there. Now, in my opinion, his faith was being tested. It would appear that God had told him that coming into the land that God's given him, that he's going to be blessed there.

And one would think that the blessing of God would include keeping him alive, at least, and so he was kind of put in a position to say, well, circumstances around me look like there's going to be a shortage of food. In fact, there is. And therefore, I have to trust God that he's going to take care of me in this famine.

Or he could take things into his own hands and go down where he knew food would be available in Egypt. Now, one might think it'd be unfair for us to ask Abraham to stay in the famine and trust God that way, when there was Egypt nearby as a place to go. But we have to realize that Abraham was a man who was to be characterized by faith.

He is the first man in the Bible who is said to have believed. That is, in Genesis. We know from Hebrews 11 that Abel had faith and Enoch had faith and Noah had faith.

So the book of Hebrews tells us that other men before Abraham had faith, and they certainly did. But Abraham is the first person in Genesis who is said in Genesis to have believed God, and it becomes the mark of Abraham. The faith of Abraham becomes legendary in the New Testament.

Paul waxes eloquent about how great Abraham's faith was in Romans 4. The writer of Hebrews talks about Abraham's faith at great length in Hebrews 11. And the man of faith that Abraham became was not what he was like when he began. And in this, he was a lot like us.

Abraham is sort of the prototype of the Christian. That's why he is called the father of us

all. He is our father.

We are the children of Abraham. Just as some of the sons of Cain were the fathers of everyone who dwells in tents and keeps livestock or makes musical instruments, it doesn't mean they were biologically related, but they followed in the footsteps, as it were. Those who make musical instruments are following in the footsteps of one of Cain's descendants, who was the father of all who do that.

And so we follow in the footsteps of Abraham, and he is therefore our father, as we have faith in God and are justified by faith. That's the thing in which Abraham was the prototype, that he was the forerunner in that way. And so his story is given to us in great length.

In fact, about 12 chapters are devoted to his story, which is more than the entire earth's history before him is given. We have 11 chapters for all the history before him, and that was 2,000 years of history in the first 11 chapters. So you can see the comparative importance that is placed on Abraham, where Moses spends 11 chapters talking about the first 2,000 years of history, and then that many chapters and more talking about the next 100 years, because Abraham began at age 75 and died at age 175, so that the recorded career of Abraham is about 100 years, almost exactly, and yet given as much time as the previous 2,000 years.

So it's disproportionate in importance, obviously. And the reason it is disproportionate in importance is because Abraham's faith becomes the prototype and the model of what God is looking for in every disciple. So we follow Abraham's career and we see many things in which he's like us.

And one of them is that his faith was not always strong. He was a man of faith, but his faith was put to the test and sometimes failed the test. Now, why do I say this is a failure of his faith? Well, one thing is his going down to Egypt put him in a compromising position.

Now, if he had felt that God told him to go to Egypt, and he felt like he was in the will of God and going down there, he should have trusted that God would keep his family safe and that no one would kill him down there. He actually thought he was putting himself in mortal danger by going to Egypt unless he could come up with some stratagem to preserve himself. He had a wife that was very beautiful.

Now, it's a strange ethic that the ancient peoples had, both the Egyptians and others, because he had to do the same thing or felt he had to do the same thing in chapter 20 with a Philistine king, Abimelech, and that is to deceive about his wife. Scholars know of an ancient story that's come out of Egypt called the Tale of Two Brothers. And in that story, which is a true story from this time period, roughly, it tells about how a pharaoh killed a man in order to get his wife.

And that story may have been known to Abram, we don't know, but he knew that that's the way people would think. They wouldn't take a man's wife while he was living, that'd be adultery. That's scruples against adultery, but not against murder, apparently.

They wouldn't take her while he's alive, but they'd kill him and take her, and then they'd feel they're okay. You know, the strange, strange morals they had. And yet that's the way they thought.

And Abram was aware of it. He thought, well, my wife is a desirable woman. Now, she was 65 years old at this time.

And some wonder, how could she have been really that much of a temptress to, you know, a king who would have the choice of, you know, all the women of his kingdom? Why would he find her particularly attractive? Well, though she was 65, she lived to be 127. And therefore, she was only about halfway. Through her lifetime, as a woman today who might live to be, let's say, 80, would be perhaps at age 40.

Certainly, there's many women at age 40 that would be considered unusually attractive, and it wouldn't be thought, you know, that's too old to be thinking that way about a woman. And so, you know, 40 is the new 65, you know. Back then it was 65, now it's 40.

For a woman. But she was right in the middle of her life. And therefore, she was, you know, on the modest side of middle age.

Now, she was also apparently very beautiful just in her generation, more than most. And it's even possible that the pharaoh was a very old man. So that, you know, 65-year-old woman might look really good to him, even if she was like today's 65.

Who knows? There are, by the way, women in their 60s who still look really good. So, I mean, in a time where women might live to be 130 years old, 65 probably didn't really. It wasn't, it wasn't decrepit, certainly.

It isn't now either. Now, later on, when she was 90, and Abram had to do the same thing with, in Gerar with Abimelech, that's a little more surprising. But many people think that when she became pregnant with Isaac, that God, in order to make her capable of getting pregnant and of bearing a child at that age, he had to rejuvenate her in more ways than one.

That she might have actually been, you know, physically made more like a young woman. So that she could become a mother. In which case, she might have looked much younger than she was.

But at this point, Abram is concerned because he feels that if he goes down there in Egypt, that they may want his wife. And if they want his wife, then they may kill him to get her. And so he made an arrangement with her.

Actually, he made this arrangement before they left her at the Calvary. He tells us that, doesn't tell us, but he tells Abimelech that in chapter 20. And basically, saying she was his sister is, of course, a half-truth.

Because she was a half-sister. But in chapter 20, when we get more of an explanation about this, when Abimelech confronts him about this ruse, Abram said in verse 11, Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place, and they will kill me on account of my wife. But indeed, she is truly my sister.

She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother. And she became my wife. And it came to pass when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, this is your kindness that you should do for me.

In every place where we go, say of me, he is my brother. So this was not just something that he came up with on this occasion. He had made an arrangement with her earlier that whenever we go into a pagan land where this might be an issue, please say, I'm your brother.

Now, we see this as a tremendous betrayal of his wife, and it is. Although, of course, in those days, we have to remember that wives and husbands were not exactly on equal social footing. Wives were certainly superior to servants and slaves, but they were not at the same level of social status as men were.

And if a wife might have to suffer some compromises in order to save her husband's life, that would have been considered, you know, a fair trade. After all, it wasn't her life that was in danger, only her virtue. And for her to save her husband's life by compromising her virtue as unsavory as that is and really immoral by our way of thinking today, it would not have been necessarily regarded as outrageous as much then as it is now.

Although the ones who were deceived by him thought it was a little outrageous, but it was something that a man might do to save his life. He shouldn't. A man should lay his life down for his wife, but that's New Testament standards.

We're talking about a man who's an Old Testament pagan, who's just come to know something about the real God, but he's still a product of his culture. It's not like he's been disciplined. And he is making this decision to deceive without any certainty that his wife would necessarily come into any danger.

After all, he said, they might kill me for you, so just say you're my sister and that'll prevent that from happening. But for all he knew, they might spend some time in Egypt and come back again and no one would ever take her. We read that the king of the land, the pharaoh, did take her, but it was not known for sure that she would really come into a harem.

The idea was if it came to that, he wanted her to lie for him or at least tell him a partial

truth. And of course, that was not a very, it was not a sacrificial thing for a husband to do. And he wouldn't have had to resort to this ruse if he hadn't been in Egypt at all.

So going down to Egypt was something that put him in the position where he felt like he had to lie, which makes me think that either he wasn't sure God wanted him there or even if he did think God wanted him to go down there, he didn't know that God can take care of you where God leads you to go. If God tells you to go someplace, then you, to my mind, living by faith means you just do what God says and you don't worry about the consequences. God takes care of the finances.

God takes care of your health. God takes care of your safety insofar as he wants to. The issue is not whether I live or die.

The issue is whether I am in the will of God. Better to die in the will of God than to live out of the will of God. And Abram had to learn these lessons.

He's just a baby in faith at this point. He's just starting out. We're going to see him go for 100 years in a relationship with God and he's going to show himself to be a very mighty man of faith in the final era.

But that's, he's like us. He starts out with little faith and his faith is tested. He doesn't seem to be passing the test here.

Now, later on in chapter 26, his son Isaac also experienced a famine in the land. It says in chapter 26, 1, there was a famine in the land. Beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham.

And Isaac went to Abimelech, the king of the Philistines, and he did the same thing Abram did. He deceived him. However, we find later on in that chapter that Isaac began to be a farmer, which he had not done before.

He had always been a sheep herder, but he became a farmer and he prospered. It says in verse 12 of chapter 26, Genesis 26, 12, that Isaac sowed in that land. Now, remember it's a famine.

It's a drought. But what a time to become a farmer, to change professions. But he sowed in that land and reaped the same year a hundredfold.

And Yahweh blessed him. I guess so. Remember the parable of the sower? Jesus said some good seed fell on good ground and produced some 30, some 60, some 100 fold.

Well, 30 fold is a good harvest. 60 is exceptional. 100 fold is almost unheard of.

And here is a man who's never farmed before. He tries his hand at it in the middle of a drought and he gets 100 fold harvest. I think it goes without saying the Lord blessed him, but it does say the Lord blessed him.

And we can presume that had Abraham trusted God and stayed in the land during the famine, God could have blessed him there too. If he blessed Isaac at a later date, he could certainly bless Abraham. And so Abraham didn't know that or didn't believe that.

And so he, he put his family in danger. And they went down into Egypt and in verse Genesis 12, 14. So it was when Abram came to Egypt that the Egyptians saw the woman that she was very beautiful.

The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house. Now she was taken to his house, but she didn't become his wife.

And that becomes clear a little later on in verse 19. Pharaoh says, I might have taken her as my wife, which he did not do. She was taken to his house.

We don't know what she did there, but we know that she was there long enough for plagues to come on Pharaoh's house over it. And I think we should assume that when a woman was taken into a king's harem, she had to go through certain preparations, maybe monthly preparation. In the case of Esther, when Esther was taken into the harem of the Persian king, I believe there was a full year of preparation where she had to bathe in perfumes and things like that.

And they had to really be prepared to go sleep with the king. And so she was brought in probably to be part of the harem, but there would be a period of time between her coming in and the time that she'd actually marry the king. So think of the faith that Sarah had to have here.

You know, I mean, she's in a hard spot and yet she's keeping her secret. And, you know, she's, I guess, just she has to trust God too, that by her obedience, that this was somehow going to work out. It did.

Now, some people think she shouldn't have obeyed. After all, we do believe that a woman should not obey her husband if he tells her to sin. So we could say, well, Abram was telling her sin, though I don't know if they knew that to be lying, to be a sin, lying to save your life might not have been regarded as a sin.

Remember, they didn't have the law. They didn't have any scripture. How much they knew of what we call Christian morals, who can say.

All that a woman knew in those days probably was that she's supposed to do what her husband says. And so in doing so, she was no doubt acting in good conscience before God and doing the right thing and pretty much leaving her situation in God's hands. And God took care of it.

God didn't let her be defiled in the situation, but she didn't know that would happen. She

was taken into Pharaoh's house and in verse 16, he treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys and camels.

Now, this is apparently gifts that Pharaoh gave to Abram in addition to the wealth that he already had more servants. You know, he's he's he's becoming a very wealthy man, but in this case, because of deception, which is not really a good way to to be to become wealthy. But it says in verse 17, but the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

Now, remember, Moses is writing this, and I bet he can't help but see a parallel between this situation and the peril and the situation Moses himself was in with Pharaoh, because in Moses' day, God plagued Pharaoh's house, too. And it was because of God's wife, Israel, being captive in Pharaoh's land. Here, Sarah had been taken captive into Pharaoh's house, and while she was held captive there, God sent plagues on Pharaoh.

And that's what happened in Moses' own day, Israel was captive in Egypt, in Pharaoh's land, and God sent plagues to deliver her from from Pharaoh. In this case, though, the Pharaoh was innocent. He didn't know what he was doing.

He didn't know that she was another man's wife. But the plagues came anyway. Now, at a later date, in the other instance where Abram did this to Abimelech, in chapter 20, we're told that the plague that God brought on Abimelech was that he closed the wombs of all the women in Abimelech's family.

So they weren't having any children. That was the plague. This seems to be greater plagues than that, just like maybe like the plagues in Egypt in Moses' day.

He plagued Pharaoh's house with great plagues because of Sarah, Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram and said, what is this you've done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Now, we don't know how Pharaoh put the two things together. He sees plagues in his house.

And then next thing we know, he knows that she is Abram's wife. I don't know that that would be something he'd immediately deduce. Unless he had had suspicions from the beginning that Abram was lying about her and that she was his wife, but he thought, well, I'll go with this.

But as soon as she came into the house, everything went wrong. Maybe he, maybe Pharaoh figured out, or maybe Sarah told him, you know, or maybe his soothsayers told him. After all, we know that high ranking Egyptians had cups with which they divine things, because Joseph did.

And maybe divination told him. We don't know how he knew, but he figured it out. And so he confronted Abram and said, what is this you've done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say she's my sister? I might have taken her as



my wife, which obviously he had not done.

Now, therefore, here is your wife. Take her and go. Your way.

So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him, and they sent him away with his wife and all that he had. So Abram leaves Egypt somewhat humbled. I would imagine probably humiliated by having been exposed in this way.

He goes back to the land of Canaan, where he probably should have stayed in the first place. In verse 13, chapter 13 says, then Abram went up from Egypt. He and his wife and all that he had and a lot with him to the south or to the Negev again.

You see, Negev is a technical term for that southern part. He didn't go south from Egypt. He went north from Egypt.

Where he went to was a place called the south. The Negev means the south, and that's the name of that region of Israel. So he went up into the and apparently was in the Negev for a while.

Now, Abram was very rich in livestock and silver and gold. And he went on his journey from the Negev as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning between Bethel and Ai to the place of the altar, which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of Yahweh.

Lot also went with him. Abram had flocks and herds and tents. Apparently, Lot was an adult by this time, perhaps even a married man.

He had his own flocks. He'd been raised as an orphan by his uncle Abram, but apparently Abram had shared some of the wealth with him. After all, Abram had no son.

So Lot may have been sort of in the position of a son in Abram's mind. He may have been, well, my wife, Sarah, she's barren. So my nephew, I'll adopt him and he'll be my son.

And Abram probably shared the wealth with him. And it turned out that Lot also had so many flocks and herds and tents that there just wasn't room for it all. Now, notice it doesn't just say they had lots of flocks and herds, but lots of tents, which means that Lot also had a lot of servants and stuff, too.

These were big entourages of this. This is a big family. Abram's family was numbering in the many hundreds, including his household servants.

Lot apparently had his share, too. Just pitching the tents for all these people in this narrow valley would have created difficulties and grazing the sheep also. And it says, 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.

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, as we were told earlier. So we have problems arising in the family.

And this, of course, is going to lead to a parting of ways. One of the things in which God's dealings with Abram seem to resemble the dealings I've seen of God in the lives of many people who get near to God is that it involves separations, a series of separations from things that are loved. First, he leaves his home.

Then his father dies and he leaves his brother Nahor in Haran. He brings Lot with him. Then he has to separate from Lot.

Later, he's going to separate from his first son Ishmael. And then finally, God's even going to tell him to offer Isaac on the altar. And we see that these loved ones, these family members that are cherished, sometimes God just wants to say, do you love me more than these? And he actually takes them from us so that we, you know, so our hearts will be wholly his.

I don't think he does that with everybody. But I've read enough biographies of godly men who've been heroes in mission field and so forth who've had that very experience. So their life has been a series of God taking one thing after another from them so that he can replace them in their lives.

And then we're going to say, well, that's not very nice of God to do that. But really, having God is the chief privilege of the believer. And for God to say, I want to have that place in your heart that that person has had is something that hurts at the time, but it ends up being better spiritually for the person because God becomes more to them as other things in the world and other lives become less to them.

And this is the first time since he's come to Canaan that he's going to have to be separated from somebody, a family member. Now, Lot, we're not very endeared to Lot. I should say he's not very endeared to us.

We don't really, probably, we're not very fond of him. He seems like kind of a creep in a way. In this story, he makes a selfish choice.

Later he's in Sodom. He offers his daughters to be raped instead of his guests. And later on, he's having children with them and so forth.

And he just doesn't seem to be an exemplary man at all. But we have to remember, he was the only boy in the family. He was like Abram's only son, although he was a nephew.

And I'm sure that Abram was attached to him. And we can see Abram dealing kind with him, although it's becoming clear that they're going to have to part company. Now, realize what Abram could have done.

He could have said, Lot, I've taken care of you all this time for your father's sake, who's my brother. And now you're a wealthy man in your own right. And I'm living in the land that God said I'm going to have.

So you might as well take your things and just go on back to Haran. You can easily make a good living for yourself. And this land is my land.

God has promised me this land. But instead, Abram seems to be very magnanimous. And in verse 8, he says, 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.

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.

Now, apparently there was one section of those two that was more desirable than the other. And we read about it in verse 10. Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of the Jordan.

Of course, that's where the river was. It'd be green. It'd be all kinds of moisture there.

Great place for grass and so forth, rather than the rest of the desert. 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 towards Zoar. That's weird for us that the story would say it's like the land of Egypt as you go towards Zoar, as if we know where Zoar is. Well, we probably don't.

But Moses' readers did. Moses' readers had grown up in Egypt, and their ancestors had grown up in Egypt. He had brought them out of Egypt in the Exodus, and therefore he's giving them some kind of reference to something they were familiar with.

You remember how it was in Egypt near Zoar? Well, Sodom and Gomorrah, before they were destroyed, that region where they were, used to all be green like that. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed east, and they separated from each other. This was a selfish choice on Lot's part.

Lot should have said, well, Abram, you've been so good to me. You take the best land. After all, God promised it to you.

I'll just take whatever's left over. Or I'll just leave. I can go back to Haran.

We've got our uncle Nahor there, and we can just live up there. But Lot makes quite a selfish choice and says, I'll take the best land, thanks. And it says in verse 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.

Now, apparently, he pitched his tent outside of Sodom. Later, we find that he moved into the city and lived in a house. In chapter 19, he's living indoors in a house in the city.

And not only that, he's also acquired some prestige in the city because he sits at the gate of the city, which was the traditional place where the judges, the magistrates sat to conduct the city's legal transactions. Sitting in the gate of the city is the traditional place of the elders or the magistrates. And people with court cases to resolve would come to the gate of the city to have them resolved by the leaders who sat there.

Lot was one of those guys in Sodom eventually. He doesn't immediately go into Sodom because it says the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against Yahweh. Lot knew that.

Abram knew that. And so Lot probably thought, well, I'll just camp nearby. I'll just be close enough to say I can do business there.

They've got a Costco in there. And then I'll have all this green pasture land for my sheep. And so I can have the best of all worlds.

I have this rural homestead. And then I have the city nearby where I can go in. And yeah, it's a wicked city.

I wouldn't move in there. But I mean, it's nice to be close enough to do business. You can make a lot of money.

When you've got a city nearby where you can sell your stuff. So he went near and pitched his tent as far from Abram as Sodom itself. Now, verse 14, 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, westward.

Now eastward would include the plain of the Jordan, which Lot had just chosen. And God says, for all the land that you see, I give to you and your descendants forever. Or your seed forever, your offspring forever.

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, your seed also could be numbered. Now there, of course, the word seed clearly is plural.

Arise, walk in the land through the length and its width, for I will give it to you. 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. Now Hebron actually wasn't yet a city in the days of Abram.

It was a location. It was a very significant city in the days of Moses later on. The terebinth trees of Mamre, some translations say the plains of Mamre.

The word terebinth trees comes from the word halom, which can, the Hebrew translation can be plain or strong tree. Different, very different meanings for the same word. So some translate the plains of Mamre, some of the terebinth trees are the oaks of Mamre.

But Mamre was a man's name. In fact, he was a man that Abram made friends with, who had two brothers. And these two brothers, along with Mamre, became his allies in the battle that Abram had to fight in the next chapter.

We read of that in chapter 14, 13, says, one who had escaped came and told Abram, the Hebrew, first referenced that word. For he dwelt in the terebinth trees of Mamre, the Amorite, brother of Eshgal and brother of Aner. And they were allies with Abram.

So Mamre was an Amorite, which is a Canaanite man. He had two brothers, apparently, that were living there too. And he allowed Abram to bring all of his tents and all of his livestock onto his property and to camp there.

And that became a more or less permanent home for Abram there near Hebron. Now, notice that Abram gave up his rights in a conflict with his nephew Lot. This is a good, this is actually a good relationship skill for conflict resolution.

Usually conflicts arise because two parties want the same thing, the same territory, the same privilege or whatever. And so they, so they conflict. But when that happened between Abram and his nephew, he said, listen, we're brothers, let there be no strife between us.

You see, they were relatives, not brothers, but brothers means relatives. Because we're brethren, we should make every effort to keep from having strife among us. Disunity among brethren is a bad thing.

How good and how pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in unity, it says in Psalm 133, verse 1. In Proverbs chapter 6, verses 16 through 19, it says, there's six things the Lord hates, yea, seven are an abomination to him. And he lists them, and the last one is the one who sows discord among brethren. God hates it when there's discord among brethren, just like a parent hates it when his, when their children don't get along with each other.

My kids all get along well with me, and they usually get along with each other. But a while back, there was a bit of a conflict between some of them. And they, you know, they were vowing that they would not be friends anymore or whatever.

And that, you know, that hurt me more than it hurt them probably. Because a parent loves all the children equally, and you want everyone to love the people you love. You want all the people you love to love each other.

And that's how God is too. He loves all his children, and he doesn't want any of his

children to be at odds with each other. He hates the person who puts a wedge between them.

He hates the one who sows discord among brethren. But it's good and pleasant when brethren dwell together in unity. Abram says a lot, we're brethren, we shouldn't allow any discord.

We need to keep the family solidarity thing going. And Christians need to do that too. Christians need to make sure that the differences between us don't break fellowship and don't become larger than the fact that we are all God's children.

We're all brothers and sisters. And that matters to God and to us, it should. And so what does Abram do? He says, he could have said, listen Lot, the best solution is for you to go home to Haran, or for that matter back to Ur of the Chaldeans.

But he didn't. He says, I'll give up some of my rights here. You need land.

I need land. Well, I'll give you your choice. Take the land you want.

I'll take whatever's left. Now, that was a hugely magnanimous thing to do. But Abram was definitely giving up rights that he had in order to have a peaceable and generous resolution to the strife that was going on.

And it would appear that Lot took advantage of it. And after Lot took the best land, Abram could have been well tempted to think, that was dumb of me. I could have just sent him home.

Why did I let him make the choice? He left me the scraps. But actually, we don't read that Abram had any complaints about it. And we do see that when Lot had left and took the best portion of the land for his estate, in verse 14, the Lord said to Abram, lift your eyes now, look all the directions.

I'm going to give all of this to you and your seed. This land is not going to be Lot's. None of it's really going to be Lot's.

And it wasn't because when Sodom and Gomorrah got destroyed, Lot and the remnants of his family made it up into the hills and lived in a cave. And so Lot didn't inherit anything. And Abram's offspring eventually did.

So Abram left the matter of his inheritance in God's hand. He even allowed it to be threatened by Lot taking part of it. But he knew that God had promised him something and he could just wait on that.

It's like when David was promised that he'd be the king of Israel. And there were times when he had the opportunity to kill Saul and seize that position for himself. But David said, no, if the Lord wants to kill him, let the Lord kill him.

I'm not going to touch God's anointed. And, you know, these men of faith, they had promises from God which when they were in a position to make it happen, but they'd have to do it by doing the wrong thing. They just said, no, I'm going to do the right thing here.

I'm going to do the peaceable thing. I'm going to do the godly thing. And I'll let God take care of the consequences.

And God, of course, came through eventually for them. Abram's seed eventually did inherit the land. Now notice here, this is the second time there's mention of the land.

The land was first mentioned as an inheritance for Abram or his seed in chapter 12 and verse 7. Where God just said to your seed, I will give this land. And now he reaffirms it. He says in verse 15, all the land which you see, I give to you and your seed forever.

It is added forever here. All the land he could see. A little later in chapter 15, there's going to be a reaffirmation of this with more detail.

In chapter 15, verse 18, it says, on the same day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram saying to your seed, I have given this land from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates. Then he goes, the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgizites and the Jebusites. All of their land, those are the Canaanite tribes.

So I'm going to give these to your seed. I've given them this seed. Now, this is forever, supposedly.

So what is the status of this land then today? Well, I think I want to say more about this when we get to chapter 15 and read that section. But maybe I could, for one thing, there's some passages I need to look up that I don't know by heart, but there definitely were conditions upon whether Israel would have the land or not. But there are no conditions on whether Abram's seed will inherit the land.

Because the land is simply an emblem for the whole world. Now, let me clarify what I mean by that. In the Old Testament, God would take a portion of a thing and designate it as holy.

Just as sort of like firstfruits of a larger category. When Israel was farming, they would take the firstfruits of their crops and offer them to the Lord as an emblem that the whole crop really belongs to the Lord. But he's getting the firstfruits as the token that tells that they acknowledge that he is the giver of all things and the crop really is his.

He also had them designate one day a week to God as a special day. But in my opinion, that simply was a way of designating that all days are God's day. He just claimed one as a token of that fact.

Israel was supposed to observe that God is the owner of all time and he can take any part of it he wants to. He asked for one day for them to observe as a proof of that. You see, if he'd asked for two or three or four or seven, they would have had to do that too.

The fact that he could ask for a day and say, I want that one for myself, means that he can do what he wants with any of them. He just happened to ask for one. He could have asked for all of them.

The fact that he can ask for it and they have to do it is an acknowledgement that he is the Lord of every day and of all time. And likewise, when he asked them to give a tenth of their income, he could have asked for half or 90 percent or all of it. He only asked for 10 percent in the Old Testament.

But the point is, it was his way of saying, I have claim on your finances. I have claim on your time. I have claim on your crops.

Give me one little portion of that as a way of recognition of that fact. I own your finances and you will acknowledge that by giving me 10 percent. I own every day.

You'll acknowledge that by devoting one of those days a special way. I own your whole crop. You will acknowledge that by giving me the first fruits.

And I believe that the land of Canaan was like that with reference to the whole earth. That God is promising to the seed of Abraham the land. But that's just a token of really the whole earth, which Abram's seed is going to possess.

Now, I'm not just making that up. Actually, that's what Paul says in Romans chapter four. In Romans chapter four, verse 13, Paul said for the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Now, Paul speaks of the promise made to Abraham and his seed about what they would inherit. Paul doesn't say that he would inherit the land, but that he would be the heir of the world. Now, where does it say that in the Old Testament? It really doesn't say it in any specific terms.

He might be referring to the fact that all the nations of the world would come under Abraham's seed, the Messiah. But that wasn't made clear to Abraham when he spoke it. He promised Abraham and his seed specific real estate boundaries were mentioned.

Specifics were given this real estate I'm giving to your seed. But Paul interprets that as really meaning that Abraham and his seed are going to be the heirs of the whole world. So apparently seeing the land of Canaan as sort of a token of real estate that represents the whole of it.



Abraham's seed is Christ and he is going to inherit the whole world. And so are we with him. Remember, Jesus said, blessed are the meek.

Why? Remember why the meek are blessed? They will inherit the earth. They will inherit the earth because Christ is going to inherit the earth. It's his heritage as the seed of Abraham, the whole world.

The land of Canaan was just a temporary token of that, just as the Sabbath and the tithe and the first fruits were tokens of God's claim on certain other things. But in Psalm chapter two, which all Christians recognize as being about Christ, verses seven through nine, the Messiah speaks and says, I will declare the decree. The Lord has said to me, you are my son.

Today I have begotten you. Ask of me, God says to Jesus, ask of me and I will give you the nations. For your inheritance and the ends of the earth for your possession.

So all the nations, all the ends of the earth will be Christ's inheritance, his possession. So he is the seed of Abraham and the promise Abraham is that he and his seed will inherit the world, said Paul in Romans 4, 13. And so these references to geography here, this land, the parts you can see, look north, south, east, west, as far as your eye can see.

I'm going to give all that to you and your seed. And likewise, you know, the boundaries are mentioned elsewhere. Now, the boundaries of the land that he's going to give to Abraham's seed, as I say, were a token of the ultimate inheritance of Christ to the whole world and us within.

But there was, of course, that actual delivery of the land to the people who had descended from Abraham when they came out of Egypt and when they came with Joshua into the land. They did inherit this land, but it was not a permanent, unconditional inheritance. I know he says I've given it to them forever, but lots of things in the Old Testament that are said to be forever aren't anymore.

God told Solomon when Solomon dedicated the new temple, he said, I will dwell in this house forever. But that temple has been gone for 2000 years. But God said he'd dwell in it forever.

When he established the Levites and the house of Aaron for the priesthood, he says, my promise to you is that you will walk before me forever. But they don't. There are no Levites.

There are no priesthood today. And many things are said to be forever. When God told Abraham to circumcise himself in his offering, he said, this is a covenant between you and me forever.

But we don't, we're not required to circumcise now. There's a lot of things in the Old

Testament that are said to be forever. Sabbath keeping, the land being given to Israel and so forth.

And we have to understand that in the scripture, when something is said to be forever, it means as far as God's concerned, this can go on forever. However, there's conditions on your part required. And God makes that very clear in a number of other places.

He doesn't always state the conditions. He doesn't have to. He states them often enough that they should know them.

But for example, look at 1 Samuel 2, verse 30. 1 Samuel 2, 30. A prophet comes to Eli, the old priest, who's at the house of Aaron.

And the prophet says to him, therefore, the Lord God of Israel says, I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before me forever. That is, it would be priest forever. But now, Yahweh says, far be it from me.

For those who honor me, I will honor. And those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Now, you see, God says, I said you guys would walk before me forever.

But this is conditional. It's like, you know, when people get married, they promise to be with each other forever and ever. So there are some conditions.

You know, if you run off with someone else and divorce me, then I'm not going to stay true to you necessarily. That's I mean, that's that's understood. The idea when a covenant is made is that I'm making these promises.

You're making certain promises to me. Assuming we both keep our promises, this is forever. Obviously, if you break your deal, then that could be renegotiated.

But from my point of view, this is forever. Now, it depends on you to maintain your end. And then it will be forever if you do.

But they don't. In Deuteronomy, Chapter 28. When Moses is talking to the Israelites about coming into their land and keeping faithful to God.

Deuteronomy 28 begins like this. Now, it should come to pass if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord, your God, to observe carefully all his commandments, which I command you today, that the Lord, your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth and all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you. And then he gives a long list of those blessings that if they are obedient to his covenant, he will bless them with.

But look at verse 15. He turns a corner there. But it should come to pass if you do not obey the voice of the Lord, your God, to observe carefully all his commandments and his statutes, which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and

overtake you.

And then he goes into a long list of curses, including verse 21. The Lord will make the plague cling to you until he has consumed you from the land, which you are going to possess. And as you go on further down, you'll find other references to you.

He'll drive them out of the land if they violate the covenant. So I'm thinking where the best verses are for that. Verse 63, it shall be that just as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing.

And you shall be plucked off from the land which you go to possess. Now, that doesn't seem to be ambiguous. God said, Abram, I'm giving this land to your descendants forever.

But just so you understand, that means, you know, in the covenant, if you break the covenant, if your descendants break the covenant, well, that changes the whole ballgame. If you break my covenant, then I will see to it that you are consumed off the land that I'm giving you, that you're plucked off it. I will rejoice in destroying you and making you nothing.

Now, does it sound like God then has some kind of unconditional promise he's made to Israel about the land? Doesn't sound like it to me. Actually, there's some verses in Leviticus, and I was hoping to look at them, but I have to admit, I don't remember their exact location. Maybe someone here does.

I think it's in the 20s. I thought it was around 22, could be 27. Let me quickly look and see if I can find, because these verses are good.

Yeah, one of them is in Leviticus 25, verse 23. It says, the land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is mine and you are strangers and sojourners with me. Now, this is in the midst of talking about a law of people being able to redeem the property after they've lost it.

But the point here is that he says, you're not allowed to sell the land permanently because it's not really your land. It's my land. It's not Israel's land.

It's God's land. You guys are there as tenants on my land. And then there's the other passage I was hoping to bring out.

And I must say, OK, I found it. It's Leviticus 18. In Leviticus 18, God is telling Israel about all the evil things that the Canaanites had done in the land before God gave it to them, to Israel.

And Leviticus 18, beginning at verse 24, says, do not defile yourselves with any of these

things. For by all these, the nations are defiled, which I'm casting out before you. That's the Canaanites.

I'm driving the Canaanites ahead of you, and I'm doing it because they have defiled themselves in these ways. For the land is defiled. Therefore, I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants.

He's just saying these people are being violently expelled from the land because I am taking it away from them. I gave it to them, but they've ruined it. I'm making the land vomit them out.

Then he says, verse 26, you, Israel, shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who sojourns among you. For all these abominations, the men of the land have done who were before you. Thus, the land is defiled.

Lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. Now, do you see that? He says, I'm driving the Canaanites out because they disgust me. It says that the land is vomiting them out.

And if you disgust me the same way they do, I'll speak to the land vomits you out, too. In other words, you don't have any more of an unconditional grant for this land than the Canaanites do. I gave it to them.

They made me sick. I vomited them out of the land. I now give it to you.

If you make me sick, you'll get vomited out of the land, too. That's what he's saying. So what we have to understand is that when God makes these statements about forever, I'm giving this to your seat forever.

Yes, there is an unconditional fulfillment in that Christ will receive the whole world forever, of which the land was a token. That is going to happen. But conditionally, Israel, the nation of Israel, were allowed to have this land as a token of an eventual inheritance of the Messiah, as a symbolic foreshadow of it.

But they could only have it conditionally if they were obedient. Do you know why the Jews have been wandering around the world for most of the last 2,000 years? It's not because of their obedience. It's because, as Jesus put it, they did not recognize the day of their visitation.

In Luke chapter 19, Jesus wept over Jerusalem. And Luke 19 and verse 41, it says, Now as he drew near, he saw the city and wept over it. Saying, If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace, but now they are hidden from your eyes.

For the days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you and surround you and close you in on every side and level you and your children within you to the ground. And they will not leave in you one stone upon another because why? You did not know the time of your visitation. You didn't recognize Christ because you rejected the Messiah.

Therefore, Jerusalem will be leveled to the ground. And what will happen then? Well, he says more about the same subject in Luke 21. And he says in Luke 21, verse 20, But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near.

This did happen, of course, in A.D. 70. Then those in Judea flee to the mountains and let those who are in the midst of her depart and let not those who are in her enter the country, in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things that are written may be fulfilled.

But woe to those who are pregnant and those who are nursing babies in those days, for there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people, the land of Israel, this people Israel. And they will fall by the edge of the sword. They did, about 700,000 of them, according to Josephus.

And they will be led away captive into all nations. They were, and that's where most of them still are. And Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times the Gentiles are fulfilled.

That's been a long time so far. Now we say, well, they've come back to the land now. Well, not really.

Some of them have. The majority of Jews still live elsewhere. Certainly far more Jews live in America than in Israel.

More Jews live in Russia than in Israel and Poland. Probably there are Jews all over the world. Israel has some of them now, but they're still scattered throughout the land.

Why? This was the judgment Jesus said would come upon them because they didn't recognize the day of their visitation. Sad, but true. God had told them you can have the land if you're obedient, if you keep covenant, if you don't make me vomit, make it vomit you out.

But what more could anger God than the killing of his son and the rejection of Christ? And so modern Israel, who do not receive Christ, do not have an unconditional grant to the land. Now, I have no objection to them being there. Some people might think I'm on the side of their enemies.

I'm not. I actually hope Israel succeeds. I actually hope they can stay there.

I'm on all for peace. I hope they have a peaceable future there in the land, and I hope they can do that without oppressing the Palestinians or anyone else. I think everybody deserves a home, and I don't have any objections that being Israel's home.

But as far as divine grants to the land, I don't see it in the Bible. It's not unconditional. It's conditioned on their obedience, and so far, Israel still does not follow Christ.

In fact, the nation of Israel does not even officially believe in God. They're a secular state, and they are emphatic about that. They don't want to be seen as a religious nation.

They want to be seen as a secular state, and that's what they are. And they're one of the states that persecutes Christians somewhat. You can be kicked out of Israel for evangelism.

In fact, the Knesset made a decision back in the 1980s that any Jew living anywhere in the world could come to Israel and be a citizen unless they believe in Jesus. Only the Jews for Jesus are not allowed to—only the Messianic Jews are not allowed to automatically come be citizens of Israel. Now, they can apply like a Gentile can, and maybe they can become citizens through a different process, but all other Jews who are not believers in Jesus can just automatically come to Israel and be a citizen.

That's a declaration of the Knesset. But Jews who believe in Jesus are singled out for special disfavor. The land of Israel is not godly.

It's a pagan land. It's an anti-Christian land. It's, to a large extent, a secular and atheistic land.

Yes, there's religious Jews there, but they're not the majority. And the majority of Jews live elsewhere in other parts of the world. So the Jews have been scattered from their land, and they don't have, under biblical terms, any particular divine grant to the land.

I do trust that things may go peacefully over there, and they may be there for a long time to come, maybe forever. It doesn't bother me if they do any more than for us to live in this country. It's not originally ours either.

We don't have a divine right to this land either. We just have it because we took it. And that's OK.

That's how it happens. That's how people get land. There's not one land in the world that has the original inhabitants on it.

Every country is made up of people who took the territory they're in now from someone who was there earlier. It's not a pretty thing, but that's just the way it is. And I think Israel has as much right to be in that land as anybody has.

But to say they have the right to be there doesn't mean that they have a divine right to do so. And therefore, when Christians say, well, no matter what Israel does to preserve their land, we're for them, even if they do atrocities, that's not the way the prophets of Israel talk. Prophets of Israel talk as if when Israel does atrocities, God's going to drive them out of the land.

So anyway, that's trying to put a balance on this promise. There is a promise that God made to Abram, and its ultimate fulfillment is in Christ inheriting the nations. Its short-term fulfillment was that God gave the land to Israel conditionally and let them keep it for a long time.

But then drove them out because they did the ultimate offense to him, killing his son. And I'm not the one who's laying that blame on him. It's the New Testament writers that do.

Peter did in Acts chapter 2. Paul did in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2. He said the Jews were the ones who God held responsible for killing Jesus. Although the Romans did it, they were put up to it by the Jews. So this is not an anti-Semitism, by the way.

I'm not anti-Semitic in the least. When I meet a Jewish person, I am more inclined to put them on a pedestal than to think badly of them. This is just straight Christian theology, that there is no race of people that has a right to anything from God outside of Christ today.

All things have been given to Christ. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to him. The only rights that anyone has are found in Christ.

And those outside of Christ, it doesn't matter what your race is. You don't have a special status. Okay, let's take a break here.

We'll be right back.