**The Wells of Genesis Series**

**“Abraham and Lot: The Well of Separation”**

**Genesis 13**

**Introduction**

Today we begin a new series of sermons entitled, “The Wells of Genesis.” During this series we will be seven different events that took place in the book of Genesis around water wells or springs. As you know water is essential to life. Water is more important than food. And watering wells became gathering places where important decisions and events occurred.

This morning’s text will come from Genesis chapter thirteen where Abraham and his nephew Lot had to separate because the watering area for their livestock was not large enough to sustain both Abraham’s and Lot’s herds.

Let’s read the narrative this recorded in Genesis chapter thirteen.

*So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him.* ***2****Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold.* ***3****He went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai,****4****to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.*

***5****Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents.****6****And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together.****7****And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land.*

***8****So Abram said to Lot, “Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers.****9****Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left.”*

***10****Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere—this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar.****11****So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other.****12****Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom.****13****Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.*

***14****The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward;****15****for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.****16****I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered.*

***17****Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.”****18****Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.*

[](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwi4wbb6jsvjAhWttlkKHV_AAg4QjRx6BAgBEAU&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.moriel.org%2Fsermons-in-english%2F5895-abraham-s-journey.html&psig=AOvVaw2iz2558hm8ivaXTo5E8B1l&ust=1563973703377449)

Since the Lord’s call to Abraham as the Father of Faith in Genesis chapter twelve, Abraham had been on the road. After leaving his hometown of Ur, Abraham traveled over 1000 miles to eventually pitch his tent somewhere between Bethel and Ai, there he built an altar, and called upon the name of the Lord. (Gen.12.4-8) But it wasn’t long until a famine covered the land that caused Abram to travel 225 miles to Egypt for relief. In Egypt Abraham was deceptive and dishonest and was eventually escorted out of Egypt. (Gen.12.10-20)

What is amazing to see is that even though Abraham had faith to leave his homeland and relatives to journey to a land where he did not know where he was going Abraham did not have faith that God would protect him while he was in Egypt. Instead of believing God would protect him in every situation Abram resorted to using lies and deceit while in Egypt. We often come to situations in our lives where we are going to stand on the promises of God or compromise God’s Word. Promises or compromise, which will you choose?

*So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him.* ***2****Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold.* ***3****He went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai,****4****to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.*

Abram returned to the spot where he previously pitched his tent, somewhere between Bethel and Ai.

**Somewhere Between Bethel and Ai**

This region was ideal for grazing and watering of livestock. So, it seems reasonable the Abraham would return to this region especially because of the large amount of livestock between Abraham and his nephew, Lot. At this point, the student of Scripture usually jumps to the strife that arose between Abram and Lot’s herdsmen. But by making this quick leap I believe you miss the turmoil that existed in Abraham’s heart.

Abram placed his tent somewhere between Bethel and Ai. Names in the Bible hold significance. Names often are tied to what the person is experiencing. In the case Bethel and Ai each contain very important meaning to what Abram was experiencing in his spiritual journey. Bethel means “House of God.” Let me expand the meaning a little further: House of Blessing, House of Peace, House of Goodness. Ai means “House of Ruin.” Let me expand the meaning a little further: House of Destruction, House of Ungodliness, House of Sin. Ai sat in the same direction as Sodom and Gomorrah.

I believe that God led Abram to pitch his tent somewhere between Bethel and Ai to demonstrate the turmoil in Abram’s heart. God had certainly called Abraham. God had certainly promise to bless Abraham. But Abraham’s heart was somewhere between the House of God and the House of Ruin. God was leading Abraham to make a firm decision of which house he wanted to live.

Abraham had taken the step of faith, obeyed God’s call, and traveled over 1000 miles to receive God’s inheritance not knowing where he was going. (Heb.11.8) But while in Egypt Abraham became rich by being deceptive and dishonest. (Gen.12.16) So now Abram sat somewhere between Bethel and Ai, somewhere between God’s House and this world, and Abram had to make a choice.

As Jesus taught us, *“A house divided against itself will not stand.”* (Mt.12.25) *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other.”* (Mt.6.24)Many people think that they can live somewhere between Bethel and Ai. Living with one foot in the House of God and one foot in the world. But it just will not work. Eventually God will lead you to the place where you must make a decision. Why? Because your life cannot sustain dwelling somewhere between Bethel and Ai.

***5****Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents.****6****And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together.****7****And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock.*

**The Land Could Not Sustain Them**

Even through the region was well watered and green the land was not spacious enough for both Abram and Lot’s herds to dwell to together. This lack an adequate space must had been obvious from the beginning but Abraham’s spiritual indecision cause the problem to drag on until eventually strife surfaced between the herdsmen. Making it clear that a decision had to be made.

***8****So Abram said to Lot, “Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers.****9****Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left.”*

**Choose Which Way**

Lot’s claim to fame was that he was with Abraham. (Gen.12.4; 13.1) Lot had journeyed with Abraham through all of the miles from Ur to Egypt, from Egypt back to somewhere between Bethel and Ai. Lot had benefited from being with Abraham but now Lot must make a decision for himself. This episode is reminiscent of Joshua’s challenge to the people saying, *“Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve.”* (Josh.24.15) No longer could Lot benefit from with Abraham. He must choose which way he was going to go.

Many of us have benefited from having Christian parents, spouses, family members, or friends that have encouraged us and motivated us in the faith. But we do not enter the House of God riding on someone else’s coat tails. We must choose which way we are going to go either to Bethel or Ai. “What a man chooses, and how a man chooses, when opportunities and alternatives and choices are put before him – nothing more surely discovers a man than that.” (Alexander Whyte, vol. 1, 134]

Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan. And why not? The valley of Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. It was clearly “greener on the other side of the fence.” But the problem was the *men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.* The Prophet Ezekiel tells us that the people of Sodom were *arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy, haughty, and did detestable things before the Lord.* (Ez.16.49-50)

But none of those things were a problem for Lot. As a matter of fact it seems the culture of Sodom was more as attractive to Lot than the spacious countryside. We see that Lot eventually moved his tents from the cities in the valley to live in downtown, Sodom. (Gen.13.12; 19.1) The text makes us think that Lot chose the valley of Jordan because it was “*well watered everywhere”* but the reality is that Lot was attracted to the sites and sounds of Sodom. The Apostle Peter tells us that Lot lived the rest of his life oppressed by unprincipled men and his soul was tormented day after day with their lawless deeds. (2Pt.2.7-8) Clearly Lot chose the House of Ruin instead of the House of God.

Brothers and sisters, the world pulls on the believer to receive cultural norms as being acceptable. The world wants the believer to accept the culture of the House of Ruin as being a good place to live. But God tells us in His Word, “*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”* (Rom.12.2) Believers must purpose themselves to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to transform our minds to obey the will of God not the will of this world. We must constantly purpose ourselves to dwell in the House of God. As the Psalmist declared in our call to worship, *One thing I have asked from the Lord, that* ***I shall seek****: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.* (Ps.27.4a) Notice the Psalmist knows that a person must seek to dwell in the house of the Lord. If you don’t seek for it you will slip away from it.

After Lot had separated from Abram, Abram settled in the land of Canaan and the Lord said to Abram, *“Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.* (Gen.13.14-15) God reaffirms His promises to Abram. Yes, Lot chose the perceived paradise of this world but Abraham enjoyed the promises of God. Which are you seeking today? The perceived paradise of this world or the promises of God?

The Psalmist taught us, *The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.**Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.* (Ps.19.9b-11) Abraham was a rich man but he understood that his biggest treasure was dwelling in the House of God.

**Abram Moved His Tent**

Even though Lot moved his tent closer and closer to Sodom, Abram moved his tent from somewhere between Bethel and Ai to dwell *by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.* (Gen.13.18) The name Mamre means “fullness” and Hebron means “fellowship, communion, or association.” Clearly Abraham chose to dwell in full communion with the Lord. No longer was Abram going to live with indecision. No longer was he going to live with one foot in the world and the other in God’s House.

Abram needed to separate himself and focus on receiving the promises of God. Therefore, Abram moved his tent and built an altar to the Lord. And that ‘s what I’m encouraging each one of us to do today.

**Closing Thought**

I’m challenging us to move our tent from somewhere in between and to build an altar of full communion with God. I’m challenging us pull away from the temptation to worldly conformity and allow the Holy Spirit to transform our minds to obey the will of God. I asking that we make a clear separation between us and the world.

*How lovely are Your dwelling places, O Lord of hosts!
My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord;
My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.*

*For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside.
I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
The Lord gives grace and glory;
No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.*

*O Lord of hosts, How blessed is the man who trusts in You!* (Ps.84.1-2, 10-12)