

## Genesis Chapters 14-15 Summary - John Karmelich

As I've stated in a previous Genesis lesson, it's a hard book to "Get one's arms around", meaning it's so wide in scope one must choose how to approach it and not try to do it all! Like much of the book, we're dealing with stories many of us have known most of our lives. It drove me back to my motto, "I believe in Jesus, now what?" With all that stated, the basic story here's about the patriarch Abraham who's now so wealthy, he has over 300 trained armed men working for him. It's relevant as a war brewed between some of the Middle East groups broke out! (What's changed over the millenniums?) After that war, we read that Abraham rescued his nephew Lot who was taken as a prisoner in that. Then we read Abraham gave 10% percent of his war winnings to the king of Jerusalem, who wasn't involved in that war! What he gave was mentioned in Psalm 110 as well as Hebrews, to show before there were Jewish priests, we got a story of Abraham giving a tithe to God's representative. Then we move to Chapter 15: God tells Abraham again that He's giving the land of Israel to his offspring. Remember Abraham didn't have any children despite the fact he was in his 80's at that time. The text also mentions it will be over 400 years before Israel will get that land for themselves!

OK John, as you love to say, "So what?" We get that God was orchestrating history to use as examples to teach us how God is guiding the events of history for His glory! How does any of this apply to what we deal with in our lives today, as you love to ask? For starters the priest of Jerusalem teaches us there is a "higher authority" than the Jewish priesthood! Yes, we all know that. Again, "So what?" At least, we get reminded that God is still on the throne and controlling the world to go as He desires. There's a lot of evil things I can't explain. I just know there is a God and despite the horrible things that occur in the world He still wants us to fight to make a difference for Him.

For example, when Abraham found out his nephew was taken captive, we don't read of him praying for God to intercede. We read of him taking matters in his own hands. I'm not advocating being a vigilante about life. I am just saying God never does miracles in situations where we can do the right thing all by ourselves! Abraham saw a problem and I assumed he prayed and then took action! Then in Chapter 15 we do see a miracle where God through a vision affirms His unconditional promise to Abraham that he will have his descendants inheriting the land of Israel. That nation has survived thousands of years and all the nations and groups that have conquered that land have come and gone! Since I see evidence that His unconditional promise to that nation stand, it also means I can trust that His unconditional promise about my salvation no matter how bad I mess up in my life!

With that said, it's time to discuss the details of these two chapters: The first part of Chapter 14 tells us of a "Middle East" war and surprise, Israel wasn't involved! Remember in those days "cites" ruled, and not countries or empires! It's the age-old story of the world, some people trying to take what they want by force. Realize this war involved places that ranged from what is Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and the county of Iran (by their city names of that time). It appears the leader that started it, was called Chedorlaomer, (which in effect is Persia, or Iran today). The battle was by the Dead Sea (the southern border of Israel and Jordan today) it involved people from all over the Middle East.

OK John, so what? A key point is that Abraham's nephew Lot lived in Sodom, one of the losing cities in that war. He didn't die but was taken captive. Abraham who was living in Israel found out probably via a messenger. Abraham didn't say, "Lot picked where he wanted to live (Sodom), too bad for him!" Neither did he say, "God's going to destroy Sodom soon, so who cares?" Abraham was wealthy enough to have a bunch of trained soldiers on his personal staff (over 300). They organized a raid against those

who won that war! They retrieved Lot and the goods the winning side stole from Sodom and the other five cities that lost that war! To give you an idea of the range of the area, the Dead Sea's at the south of Jordan River. The rescue took place in Damascus which is northeast of Israel in Syria.

Then we get a key scene. We get the king of Jerusalem blessing Abraham. Maybe that king was happy as the warring factions lost. All we know is this king, who's lineage isn't given, blessed Abraham. The key point for Christians is Abraham gave 10% of the war winnings to him. It would go down as "Bible Trivia", but the book of Psalms (110) makes a big deal about the fact as he is the only other "Priest and King" we get in the bible other than Jesus Himself. I don't see that Jerusalem king to be anything more than a man, I just believe it's mentioned in that Psalm and in Hebrews 7 to show that Abraham giving a total of 10% of the "loot" was symbolic of the true king and priest ruling, as the Levitical system hasn't happened historically yet!

The scene then switches to the king of Sodom (remember he's one of the kings that lost that war). He's telling Abraham to keep the stuff he got back in that war as a reward. Abraham said no, simply as he's a witness for God, and wanted to show that God alone made him wealthy and not his efforts to get Lot back! That in effect ends Chapter 14.

Chapter 15 to me is "more fun"! Abraham was concerned, because God said his descendants will have the land of Israel and Abraham and his wife were "getting up there" with no children! Chapter 15 is in effect God reassuring Abraham of that promise. I must admit I thought about John the Baptist's father. An angel told his father he and his wife would have a baby late in life, who'd be a "big deal"! When his father expressed doubts that angel said in effect, "I'm one of the top angels in heaven, do you think I'm just messing with you?" The father wasn't able to talk until John the Baptist was born! Coming back to Genesis, when Abraham was in doubt, God organized a big demonstration to prove it would occur. We need to remember Abraham's life was many centuries before Israel was a nation and no Temple existed during his time! John the Baptist's father stood in the temple when he got his miracle! Just saying, it is still "early in the game", when Abraham got proof God says what He means and means what He says.

For those who don't know the story, before the days of lawyers the way a contract was sealed would be by an animal being cut up and both parties agreeing that if they violated that contract they'd end up like those dead animals. Abraham was wealthy and understood that principal: God asked him to cut in half a bunch of animals except two birds, as birds are often symbols of evil in the bible. The birds were not cut to symbolize who watched over the contract! After the deed was done Abraham had to chase away vultures from the carcasses waiting on God's timing. He then put Abraham in a deep sleep. While that occurred, Abraham saw a vision of God walking through the animals. The point being that God's going to keep His unconditional promise to Abraham about lots of descendants and that's that!

We also get the promise that the Israelites will suffer in bondage for 400 years before this happened. I would argue that when Abraham's grandson Jacob, went to Egypt to see his long-lost son Joseph, Jacob knew the 400 years were about to begin. Technically it didn't include 30 years when Joseph's rule over Egypt occurred, so it was 400 years after that! So why did the 400 years occur? Part of it was God was giving the Canaanites (inhabitants of Israel) time to repent of their sins. (Archology shows those people were pretty disgusting in how they lived!) Plus the 400 years was for God to do the greatest miracles in history, rescuing a slave nation out of what's the most power nation in the world at that time!

OK John that's a nice history story. Assume we believe it's accurate. Now what? I'd simply remember that if we can trust God to keep His unconditional (key word) promise to Abraham, that also means we can trust His unconditional promises to us through Jesus. I'll just leave it at that!

On the same page as this study is a more detailed study I wrote many years back. You are welcome to email me if you want or join my list to the get the latest lesson. Thanks for reading. John