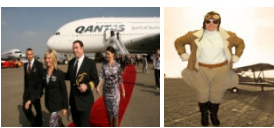


Blessed By Association

Genesis 13,14

There's an old saying. The longer you've been around the more you'll realize there's something true about it. It's not what you know, it's WHO YOU KNOW. That's what they say. And a lot of the time. That seems to be how you get what you want. That's how you get Promotion, it's not what you know, it's who you know. That's how you get the discount, that's how you get tickets to the game. And I'm hoping to get some from Ruth for the Broncos match today. She's someone who it's good to know. Whether you like it or not. It's not what you know.. it's WHO YOU KNOW. Our world works that way a lot of the time.

So if you can't be successful yourself they say....make sure you hang around someone who IS. You'll bask in their glow, maybe some of their success will rub off on you. That's the whole idea of celebrity endorsements. You're successful. So I'll pay you to endorse my product. And it's a powerful thing. Here's some examples.



If you're Qantas. Will you associate with this guy. Or this one?



If you're Nike, will you go with??

Certain people, just seem to radiate success. And you can understand why people want to share the glory. Be blessed by association.

Now ABRAM'S LIKE THAT. Abram's the star, Abram's the champion, ABRAM'S the one you want endorsing your product. If your Nike, or in this case maybe the Red Sea Date manufacturers. Or something like that. He's the man you want on the side of the packet. Because God's endorsed him...as the bearer of his promises.

Now, of course. If you were here last week you might be wondering how that can be? Since Abram had to slink off in shame from his deceitful scheming with Pharaoh in Egypt. How can that be since Abram hid behind the skirts of his wife...because of his LACK OF FAITH in God's power and promise. But here's the thing. None of that changes the fact that Abram's the one God's put his hand on. God hasn't revoked his words from Genesis 12. And he's been bounced back to the land God promised.

And as they head back from Egypt. The surprising thing is. Abram's coming back fully loaded. That's the picture in verse 2. Even when he gets it mightily wrong...he seems to have the midas touch.

Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.

Abram's the gypsy Donald Trump. Which is good for him for one. But also...good for you...if you're with him. Good if you're his nephew. Because you're sharing in the blessing. Which Lot is.

In verse 5 Lot's also doing pretty well. Too well it seems. Because between them. Between Abram and Lot. With the amount of flocks and herds they've got. The land can't support them.

Their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together.

And there's starting to be fights between their two herdsmen.

So Abram says. Let's sort this out. We're brothers. Let's not have strife between us. You choose where you want to go.

Which is a Magnanimous offer on his part.

But I want you to just notice the repeated idea that comes through. From Verse 6 have a look there. the land could not support them while they STAYED TOGETHER. Their possessions were so great that they were NOT ABLE to STAY TOGETHER. Again if you go down... halfway through verse 9 Abram says. Let's PART COMPANY. If you go to the RIGHT. I'll go to the LEFT. Lastly. End of verse 11. Lot chooses and The two men PARTED COMPANY. Almost sounds like they're getting a divorce or something.

And I wonder..... who would you go with if you had the choice?

Because there in verse 10. Abram stands back and says YOU CHOOSE. And it's fairly easy to get how Lot makes his decision. Because he looks up. Literally. Lot lifted up his eyes to see. And what he saw – rich though he already was. What he saw was the fertile Jordan plain. What he saw was lots of water. Like the Garden of the Lord. Which I'm guessing was pretty good. Or like Egypt with the Nile River.

Which is where they just went in the famine. What he saw was a bright future for him and his family. Onward and upward to bigger and better things.

So on his left is Abram his uncle. Who bears God's promise . Which are not fully seen yet. And on his right. A land full of promise right before your eyes.

What do you choose?

Lot chooses. To walk away from Abram. The two men parted company.

And what's just happened makes perfect sense... at one level. It's a practical necessity isn't it?

Well maybe. But if you think Lot's decision is wise.... you won't think that for long. And the hint's there in the brackets of verse 10 that all is not well.

Because Lot's walking away from Abram. And he's walking....towards the places called Sodom and Gomorrah.

And the writer's poking his nose in quite obviously here. See in the brackets there. This is before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. And the dark clouds are forming. Because

Genesis 13:12-13 ¹² Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom.

And the men of Sodom...were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.

But just hold that thought for a moment while you come back to Abram.

Who's got the left - overs. Bit of a pun there.

Abram's got the leftovers in the land of Canaan. But after Lot moves away. God speaks to Abram. And he re-states his promise. From chapter 12. Lift up YOUR EYES Abram God says. Verse 14.

"Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. ¹⁵
All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.

And if you decided to stay with Abram you'd be pretty pleased. Because that's what Lot's walked away from. Not just his uncle. But God's promise and blessing along with it.

And the significance of that comes out almost straight away. Because what Lot saw...was a fruitful and prosperous future. The reality is....Lot's just walked into a warzone. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah are subjects to a King called Kedorlaomer. But after 12 years they're sick of it and they rebel. And now Kedorlaomer's rounded up four other kings. He's got an army. And he's ANGRY. They defeat a bunch of tribes on their way to the rebels on the Jordan Plains. And verse 8. The Kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and a couple of others. They line up for battle. But they have to do the great military manoeuvre called the backwards advance. They run away. And as a result. All their stuff gets taken away. Including Lot and everything he's got. V11.

¹¹ The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away. ¹² They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom.

Notice Lot's now living IN Sodom itself.

But he's carted off. His whole land over-run. Which you'd think spells the end for him. Except that it's not what you know, it's who you know, and Lot's pretty well connected.

And someone escapes from the battle and Uncle Abram hears what's happened. And he springs into action. Not thinking about himself this time. His Nephew's in trouble and there's no hesitation. He's straight off with 318 of his trained men. And they're in hot pursuit, heading north. At night time they catch up and win what seems like an unlikely, but convincing victory.

Verse 16 there's the result.

¹⁶ He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.

It's not **what you know**. It's **who you know**. And Lot has clearly got friends in all the right places. Because Abram is the one **blessed by the promises of God**. And whoever blesses Abram will be blessed, and whoever curses him will be cursed.

And by the end of chapter 14, **all the nine kings** who are mentioned at the start of the chapter are in **awe of him**.

And you see that in what happens next. This is the part just after the big victory where if you're at the movies you start checking to see if you've got all your stuff. Because the movies about to end. The hero's just got to make his speech or get the crown or the girl or the reward.

And Abram's heading back in victory. And he's in Kings Valley where he's met by two kings.

And there's two pretty different conversations here. One with the King of Salem. And another with the King of Sodom. Both different. But in each one, and acknowledgement that Abram's the one blessed by the God who made the heavens and the earth. Which is far better than just being a tenant in a part of it.

I mean we know it in principle from chapter 12. But here it is working itself out. The fact that Abram's the man at the centre of God's promises for the world.

Take a look at the conversation with the **King of Sodom**. You can read it in verse 21. And I reckon you can imagine Russell Crowe here as the gladiator king. You can read it there in the NIV but the Hebrew is more caveman like and the King of Sodom says something like GIVE ME PEOPLE. YOU TAKE GOODS.

But Abram says, I'll take **none of it**. I've taken an oath. You'll never be able to say I **made Abram rich**. Because he's confident; confident that his blessing will come from the **promises of the creator of heaven and earth**. And not from the corruption of Sodom.

And again. Verse 18. Melchizedek, mysterious king of Salem comes out "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. ²⁰ And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand."

Credit where credit's due. Your **victory today** is **God's doing**. Because **you're the man**. Blessed by God most high, creator of Heaven and Earth.

You're blessed by your association with Him.

And it's interesting. Because now we're at the end of the next episode. Abram's done himself proud. And on one hand he's blown off the king of Sodom. But on the other hand. This guy Melchizedek. All of a sudden you get the feeling.

Here's someone who stands over and above even Abram.

I mean, Abram's been the **bridge for people to God's blessing**. But somehow, we're told, **Melchizedek** is a **priest** of the most high God. Before Israel's priests have even been invented. And this Melchizedek King of Salem, which is later on renamed **Jerusalem**, he's somehow **speaking to Abram on behalf of God**. And so as he blesses Abram in the words we've just seen, he's acting as Abram's **bridge**. **He's Abram's priest and mediator**. Which in a way is what Abram's been doing for **Lot**. Now this mystery guy **Melchizedek** is doing the same thing for him.

So he blesses Abram and then Abram gives him **a tenth of everything**. Which is what hundreds of years later, Israelites are told to do as well. Bring their **tithes** to the **priests** and the **Levite** temple workers. As an offering to God.

It's kind of like a time warp. Because Abram's doing it with Melchizedek. The King of Jerusalem before there was Jerusalem. The **priest of the most high God** before there were priests. The **tithe** before there were tithes. As Melchizedek brings out the **bread and wine** and pronounces God's blessing.

Which is pretty strange. But it points to something. And this is the idea that gets picked up in Hebrews 7 that we'll look at in a minute. And that is. That even

though Abram's the **one to hang round with if you want to be blessed**, there's at least the possibility of someone **greater in the shadows**. A Priest-King who Abram bows to and pays a tithe to and honours.

And Hebrews 7 comes back to this little event with Melchizedek. And points out that even though in the scheme of things...Abram was **great**. Melchizedek was **greater**. And **Jesus** tops both of them.

Slide Heb 7

And Hebrews 7 says, cast your minds back to **before** the levitical priests and the temple ritual. Before all that stuff. To the fact that there's **another kind of priest**. And Abram **bowed down to him**.

Jesus... is a high priest like that. The other kind of priests, they'd make sacrifices for your sins. Over and over again. And they'd wear out and die. Jesus has done it **once and for all**.

Verses 1 to 7. Melchizedek, King of Salem, Priest of God Most High. Meets Abraham returning from the defeat of the Kings, just how we've seen; Abram gives him a tenth of everything. This mysterious **king of righteousness**; King of Peace. No background details. Just pops into Genesis 14 with no introduction. And with no details of what happens next either.

SLIDE V 3 ff

So **like the son of God** he remains a **priest forever**. So **great** says verse 4, that **even Abraham** gave him a tenth of the plunder.

Here's the point. Jesus wasn't from the tribe of Levi either. **But he's the perfect priest**. The perfect **middle man** between us and God. Because that's what a **priest** actually is. The perfect one to **stand between you and God**. And speak on your behalf.

See, it's great to be well connected. It's great to know people in **high places**. Well, with Jesus it's the **ultimate example of that**.

SLIDE – V 15,16

Because he stands before God on **our behalf**. And he does that, says verse 16, on the basis of his **indestructible life**. Which is far better than the priesthood that came before.

So what's that all mean for you and I? Well it's nice when the New Testament makes the link so clear. Because you go from Abraham to Melchizedek to Jesus. And you can look at Lot and see how he's blessed by association with Abram. So it's pretty clear. If Lot's stands or falls by his association with Abram...then we need to stick with Jesus.

And the conundrum's the same as well. Do you go for the promises that come through Jesus? Eternal life. Forgiveness. Peace with God. Those things. Established by the resurrection. But at the same time. They're the now but not yet aren't they? So do you go for that? Or do you lift up your eyes. Especially in a

rich country like ours. Especially with the opportunities around. Do you go for what you can see? It is a sort of a left or right decision. Which seems a bit calculating. But I think that's how it is.

Here's the difficulty. The promises that come through Jesus. The blessing of association with him. Are in a sense. Intangible for one. They're INTANGIBLE...and they're unrealized at the same time. And that's where it gets hard. Because you're weighing that up...against more tangible and realizable other things.

I mean go to Harvey Norman and you can have it all TODAY. Interest free no repayments for 50 years or something.

And not only CAN YOU have it. We're living next door to people who DO. Which makes it even harder. And someone's talking about their growing bank balance and the \$100000 dollar a year job and the new Audi. And you'll say. But I'm growing in Godliness. Well bully for you. Just seems pitiful by comparison.

And every day it's that same choice. Do I stick with Jesus...and wait for God to tell me when it's time to lift up my eyes? Or do I just hang it all and grab what I can now. It is as simple as that.

Sticking with Jesus. Which means sticking with church. Which means. Sticking with having that servant heart. Which means making decisions that will mean you don't become distant from Jesus and his people. And that can so easily happen. You financially tie yourself up so much. That giving or being generous just isn't

possible for you. You're so busy. Or have other priorities. That church only happens when it suits. And step by step by step you find. You've parted company with Jesus. And you've walked away from the blessing.

And the point is here. Is saying. Is hang on to the promise. Because it's worth it. The point is here. Don't walk away. Don't harden your heart. But stick with Jesus. Stick close. The writer to the Hebrews goes on to say exactly that.

Slide – Heb 10

Hebrews 10:19-23 ¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us DRAW NEAR to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith,

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Let's DRAW NEAR....and a bit further down....verse 23having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us HOLD UNSWERVINGLY to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

It's that same idea. It's great when someone becomes a Christian. But it's even better when someone holds unswervingly to the end. Sticking with Jesus.

In the end. It's not what you know. It's who you know. That matters. No matter how well off you think you are.