

Introduction

In the passage before us today, we transition from the quiet altars of Canaan into the chaos of the very first world war recorded in holy writ. We see powerful eastern kings sweeping through the land, bringing destruction and taking Abram's nephew Lot captive—a direct result of Lot pitching his tent toward Sodom. But in the midst of this darkness, we see Abram act with the heart of a shepherd, stepping out in faith to rescue his kinsman.

Even more profoundly, as Abram returns victorious, he is met on the road by two radically different kings: the worldly King of Sodom, who offers material riches, and a mysterious king-priest named Melchizedek, who brings bread and wine and serves as a magnificent type pointing us straight to our Lord and High Priest, Jesus Christ.

What a comfort it is to know that our God sees us in our captivity, that He provides a Deliverer, and that He calls us to look beyond the wealth and compromises of this world to find our true refuge in the King of Righteousness and King of Peace.

Open your heart to what the Holy Spirit wants to teach us today.

Please open your Bible to the book of Genesis, chapter 14.

Bible Study

The Battle of the Kings and the Mystery of Melchizedek

Genesis 14:1-24

In Genesis chapter 14 we find ourselves right in the middle of the very first world war recorded in Scripture. Now, don't get bogged down in the names of these kings in Genesis 14:1-2. We have Amraphel, Arioch, Chedorlaomer, and Tidal. These were powerful rulers from the east—the area of Babylon and Persia. They formed a confederacy and came down to make war against the kings of the plains, including the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Bible tells us in Genesis 14:4 that these local kings had served Chedorlaomer for twelve years, but in the thirteenth year, they rebelled. It's interesting, isn't it? Throughout the Word, we see that numbers often have a spiritual significance. Throughout the Bible the number twelve is the number of divine government, but thirteen is frequently associated with rebellion. In the Greek language, the numeric value—the gematria—of the names for Satan is often divisible by thirteen. It is the number of lawlessness, and here in the thirteenth year, rebellion broke out.

The Capture of Lot

These eastern kings swept through the land. Archaeology has actually confirmed this invasion, uncovering cities from this period—around the 17th to 19th century B.C.—that were utterly wiped out and never rebuilt. They moved toward the Valley of Siddim, an area full of "slimepits" or asphalt pits. When the battle turned against the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, many fell into these pits while others fled to the mountains.

The victors took everything. They took the goods, the food, and most tragically for our story, they took Lot—Abram's nephew—and all his possessions. Lot had been "pitching his tent toward Sodom," but now he was a captive of Sodom's enemies.

Abram the Hebrew

In Genesis 14:13, someone who escaped brought the news to "Abram the Hebrew." This is the first time that word is used in the Bible. It likely comes from the name of his ancestor, Eber. When Abram heard his kinsman was taken, he didn't hesitate. He didn't say, "Well, Lot chose to live there, let him deal with it." No, Abram showed the heart of a shepherd.

He armed his "trained servants"—318 men born in his own house. Think about the wealth required to maintain a household where 318 men are ready for battle! They pursued this massive army all the way to Dan, about 125 miles north. Through a brilliant night attack, Abram's small force defeated the confederacy of kings, pursuing them past Damascus and recovering everything—the goods, the women, and his nephew Lot.

The King of Peace

As Abram returned from the slaughter of the kings, he was met by two very different rulers. First, we see this mysterious figure in Genesis 14:18: Melchizedek.

"Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God." (Genesis 14:18, NKJV)

Melchizedek is a fascinating figure. His name means "King of Righteousness," and he was the King of Salem, which means "King of Peace." Salem was the ancient name for Jerusalem. He appears out of nowhere—no genealogy, no record of his birth or death. He brings bread and wine, the very elements we use to remember the communion of our Lord.

In this encounter, we see a beautiful picture of spiritual submission. Abram, the father of the faithful, recognizes that Melchizedek carries a unique spiritual authority. He humbles himself to receive a blessing from this king-priest and responds by giving him a tithe—a full tenth—of all the spoils.

By doing this, Abram acknowledges a priesthood that stands on a completely different level than the one that would later come through his own great-grandson, Levi. You see, the Levitical priesthood was bound by the Law and by physical genealogy, but this order is different.

Centuries later, the Holy Spirit moved King David to write these profound words:

"The LORD has sworn and will not relent, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" (Psalm 110:4, NKJV)

Now, we have to be clear: Melchizedek was a literal man, a historical king who eventually passed away. However, the Holy Spirit purposefully left his genealogy, his birth, and his death out of the inspired record of Genesis. Why? To create a living "type" or symbol. Because his end is never recorded, he stands in the pages of Scripture as a representative of an eternal priesthood—one that doesn't rely on being born into the right family, but on the power of an endless life.

This all points us directly to Jesus. Unlike the earthly priests who served and then died, Jesus shed His blood once for all, rose from the grave, and now lives forever to make intercession for you and

me. He is our Great High Priest, not because of a legal requirement, but because He conquered death!

In the New Testament book of Hebrews, we see this all come together. Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest. He didn't come from the priestly tribe of Levi; He came from Judah. He is our King of Righteousness and our King of Peace. Melchizedek was a type of Christ, and Abram's response to him indicates a clear message: Abram was looking to a higher Kingdom.

Refusing the Spoil

Then comes the King of Sodom. He says to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods to yourself." It was a tempting offer. Abram could have become even more incredibly wealthy in a single day.

But look at Abram's response in Genesis 14:22-23: "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap... lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'".

Abram didn't want the world to take credit for God's blessing. He had already checked in with "God Most High." He knew that if he took the wealth of Sodom, he'd be beholden to Sodom.

Practical Application & Challenge

There is a powerful lesson here for us. Who are you letting "make you rich"? Are you looking to the world for your satisfaction and your provision, or are you looking to the "Possessor of heaven and earth"?

- The Danger of "Sodom": Lot lived in Sodom and lost everything. Abram visited the valley only to rescue others and refused to take even a "sandal strap." We need to live in this world, but we must not let the world get into us.
- The Honor of God: Abram was jealous for God's glory. He didn't want any man saying, "I made Abram what he is." May we have that same heart—that when people look at our lives, our families, and our ministries, they don't see our cleverness, but the hand of God.

My challenge to you is this: In your business dealings, in your relationships, and in your private life, are you "lifting your hand" to the Most High God? Are there things you need to refuse—even if they are "legal" or "profitable"—because they might compromise the testimony of what God is doing in your life?

An Invitation

Perhaps you find yourself like Lot today. You've been chasing the things of this world, trying to find peace in the "lush valleys" of life, but you've ended up a captive. You're a prisoner to sin, to fear, or to a life that feels empty.

I want you to know that there is a Greater Deliverer than Abram. Jesus Christ looked at our captivity and He didn't stay far off. He came to where we were. He shed His precious blood on the cross to pay the debt for our rebellion. He died for your sins, and three days later, He rose from the dead! That resurrection declares to the whole universe that He is God, He is Savior, and He is Lord.

Through the Bible
Daily Reading Companion
01-Genesis-Chapter 14

He is the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace. If you will turn from your way today and put your trust in Him, He will break the chains of your captivity.