

Genesis 14

The story of a war. This is the first war mentioned in the Bible—the first specific account of a military engagement. The war was between two blocks of nations. The first block of nations was that of the four kings of the east (14:1). Kedorlaomer, king of Elam (modern Iran), seemed to have been dominant. The second alliance was made up of five southern kings, including the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah (14:2).

For twelve years the four eastern kings had ruled over the five southern kings (v. 4). The five southern kings were tired of being ruled over so they formed an alliance and rebelled. They were tired of paying tribute to the four eastern kings. But the four eastern kings could not allow any uprising to succeed because of the economic issues at stake. The territory known as the “way of the kings” was the land bridge through which commerce between Egypt and the four eastern kingdoms passed. Whoever controlled this land bridge had a monopoly on international trade.

What was the end result of the conflict (v. 11)? Sodom and Gomorrah were sacked. Everything and everyone that could be carried off was. The four kings conquered the five kings and retained control of the trade route (vv. 1-12).

All of this secular history begs the “so what” question. Why did the Lord record this? What message is God sending to us? It reminds us that God is in control of secular history. He isn’t just involved with this little Jewish community. On the surface this international incident may look like a power struggle with economic supremacy as the object, but events which appear to be only secular often have a much deeper spiritual purpose and significance.

This incident shows us that Abram had to interact with the outside secular world just like we do. This little Jewish community was not designed to function as an isolated, insulated, stand-alone entity. Just because we’re Christians, it doesn’t mean we should live our lives in isolation, in some sort of protective cocoon.

What happened to Lot and his family (v. 12)? They were captured and carried off.

When Abram and Lot separated (13:12), where had Abram chosen to live? In the land of Canaan, the Promised Land, in the hill country. **Where had Lot chosen to live?** Among the cities of the plain of the Jordan..... near Sodom. **Where was Lot now living (v. 12)?** Lot was living in Sodom.

What were the consequences of his seemingly no-brainer choice to live in the lush part of the valley (v. 12)? He was caught in the middle of an international incident, captured and taken away as a prisoner. Can you imagine the thoughts which went through Lot’s mind as he and his family and all their goods were being carted off to a distant land? “I wish I had given Abram first choice!” Our decisions have consequences.

Application: The pull of the world is strong and not to be underestimated.

What message did the escapee bring (v. 13)? That Lot had been captured. **What was Abram’s perspective on Lot’s capture (v. 14)?** Abram could have said that Lot deliberately chose to take advantage of him and he got what he deserved—that he chose to live in Sodom so let him learn his lesson in captivity. But he didn’t. Abram immediately responded to Lot’s need.

Abram assembled a vast army. How many men did Abram take to war? 318 trained men. **How many did they go up against?** The armies of the four kings thousands.

That fact he was willing to go into battle against overwhelming odds....What does that imply about Abram? He had great faith and trust in God (and his men). Lot’s rescue was a family honor issue, also. He was concerned for Lot not for his own skin – contrast that with giving away Sarah for his own protection where he was afraid for himself. Abram had continued to grow and mature in his relationship with the Lord since returning from Egypt.

What was the outcome of the battle (vv. 15-16)? He routed the armies of the four kings and recovered Lot, his family and all his goods.

Upon his victorious return, who were the two men who came out to meet Abram (vv. 17-18)? The king of Sodom and Melchizedek. Two kings, rulers of two different cities, each with an opportunity to offer.

What do we know about Melchizedek (v. 18)? He is both King of Salem (Jerusalem) and priest of God Most High. Some say he was the pre-incarnate Christ; that this was a Christophany. There is no mention of his birth or death. He is a mysterious figure (Hebrews 7:1-3). Bottom line – He is God’s agent/representative.

Where else do we see him? This was his only appearance in the Bible. **What did Melchizedek do?** Blessed Abram. **What was God’s purpose in Melchizedek’s appearance?** His presence was designed to counter the king of Sodom, and make sure Abram’s focus was right and that God got the glory. Melchizedek’s words were intended to remind Abram that the victory was God’s, and that his success was a result of God’s blessing not because he was a mighty warrior.... but rather because he had a mighty God.

This was a test for Abram. How would he handle success? Would he take credit or give God glory? **In response, what did Abram do (v. 20)?** Gave Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils of war. **What was that all about?** It was a form of Worship. He gave God the glory. This is the first example of tithing in the Bible.

Why did Abram accept Melchizedek’s blessing and refreshments and even tithe to him? What did those actions demonstrate? They were an act of submission and recognition of God’s authority. Abram understood that it was God who deserved the glory.

Application: **Have there been any Melchizedek’s in your life? Are there people God has sovereignly put in your life for His purposes?**

What did the King of Sodom propose to Abram (v. 21)? That Abraham keep the spoils of battle. Basically, he said, “Abram, I have a deal for you. Why don’t you just take everything! You succeeded, and you deserve to be rewarded for your accomplishment as a great general. You deserve all the glory and all the riches that go with it. Just give me the people.”

What was his motive? The king of Sodom was trying to establish a relationship with Abram with an eye toward establishing a future alliance. To be aligned with Abram would mean that Abraham’s God was on his side. He recognized the greatness of Abram’s God.

How did Abram respond to the offer by the King of Sodom (vv. 23-24)? Abram refused to accept anything from this pagan king or become indebted to him. Abram refused what was rightfully his and stated, “*You will never be able to say, ‘I made Abram rich,’ i. e. there will be no future relationship between us.*”

Application: Perhaps no test a man faces is greater than that of success. How did Abram handle his success? He gave glory to God. Success is just as much a test as it is a reward.... perhaps more. The same choice/challenge lies before each of us. Every day the two kings come before us in the valley and make us the same offer. Either we take the credit, or God gets the credit.

What lesson(s) can we learn about alliances? Abram was very selective in his alliance, and serves as a model for us. 2 Corinthians 6:14: “*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers*” applies in relationships of all kinds including business partnerships.

This event provides us with a beautiful illustration of the salvation of God. Lot chose to go his own way, seeking his own interests. As a result of his self-seeking, Lot had to face the consequences of his sin. Rather than peace and prosperity he found shame and slavery. At the point where Lot was able to do nothing to correct his errors or to free himself from bondage, Abram, at great personal risk, won the victory and Lot’s release. Saving Lot was the sole reason for Abram’s daring rescue. In spite of Lot’s disregard for Abram, Abram rescued him from the consequences of his own sin. Just like Jesus has done for each one of us! He has paid the penalty and the ransom to set us free!

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