

ABRAHAM COMES TO THE RESCUE

TEXT: GENESIS 14:1-24

INTRODUCTION:

1. Genesis 14 is often overlooked. It records the first battle in the Bible.
Actually it is the first battle in all of recorded history.
2. There were nine kings in this conflict, and apparently they were all wicked.
3. A tenth king is mentioned in verse 18 -- the mysterious Melchizedek, king of Salem and the priest of the most high God. Melchizedek is presented in the Bible as a picture and type of the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. This chapter not only records the first war, but also we have here the first mention of kings (14:1), a priest (14:18), bread and wine (14:18), and tithes (14:20).
5. John Phillips said that, "God's ideal priest is not a ritual priest after the order of Aaron, but a royal priest after the order of Melchizedek. Similarly...God's ideal king is not a warrior king...God's ideal king is a worshiping king like Melchizedek" (*Exploring Genesis*).
6. Years ago Bart Brewer preached in our church a few times. I remember him referring to his ordination into the Roman Catholic priesthood.
7. His ordination into the Roman Catholic priesthood was at a large Roman Catholic church in Washington D.C.
8. A Roman Catholic bishop placed his hands on Bart's head and repeated the words from Psalm 110:4 -- "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."
9. Bart said he felt overwhelmed with the belief that he had become a mediator between God and men. It wasn't until years later when he got saved and started reading the Bible, did brother Bart understand he was not "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek," and he was not "a mediator between God and men."
10. Melchizedek is mentioned as a type of Christ in Psalm 110 and in Hebrews 7. Only the Lord Jesus Christ is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek; and only the Lord Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and men.
11. First Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."
12. We will get to Melchizedek later, but before he encountered Melchizedek, Abraham rescued his nephew Lot, who was taken captive during a battle in the vale of Siddim.

I. WAR BREAKS OUT

1. We have here in Genesis 14 an account of the first war recorded in Scripture. We would not have had this record of the war had it not been for the fact that Abraham and Lot were involved in it.
2. For many years, liberal critics rejected Genesis chapter 14 as inaccurate and unhistorical. However, the discovery of ancient tablets changed all that and this discovery has proved the accuracy and authenticity of the account recorded here in Genesis 14.
3. In these tablets, King Chedorlaomer is referred to as Kudur Lagamar; and Amraphel, the king of Shinar (Babylon) is called Hammurabi.
4. Furthermore, the discovery of the code of Hammurabi in 1901 has given a further confirmation to the historical character of Genesis 14.
5. As a matter of fact, there have been scores of archaeological findings that have confirmed the historical accuracy of the Bible.
6. Professor Nelson Glueck was an American archaeologist, who served as the president of Hebrew Union College from 1947 until his death in 1971. His pioneering work in Biblical archaeology resulted in the discovery of 1,500 ancient sites.
7. Dr. Glueck said, "I have excavated for thirty years with a Bible in one hand and a trowel in the other, and in matters of historical perspective I have never found the Bible to be in error."
8. So we can have absolute confidence in the accuracy of God's Word. The Bible is the inerrant, infallible Word of God.
9. The invading armies were led by four kings (14:1), and King Chedorlaomer of Elam was the strongest of the four (cf. 14:4).
10. The insurrection started when the five cities of the plain decided they would no longer pay tribute money to Chedorlaomer, the king of Elam. Verse 4 says, "they rebelled" against King Chedorlaomer.
11. This rebellion brought Chedorlaomer, the king of Elam from his distant capital, and as he marched from the east to the west toward the vale of Siddim, he added to his army his various tributaries.
12. These allies are Amraphel, the king of Shinar (northern Chaldea), Arioch, the king of Ellasar, a district on the east of the Euphrates River, and Tidal, "king of nations" (14:1), who ruled over the nations or tribes to the north of Babylon.
13. As Chedorlaomer, the king of Elam, and his allies moved westward, they defeated various armies along the way, including the Rephaims and the Zuzims, who were known as giants (14:5, 6; cf. Deut. 2:20).

14. This road they traveled later became known as "the king's high way" (Numbers 20:17; 21:22).
15. Next, the kings and their armies "smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazezon-tamar" (14:7).
16. The invaders were on their way toward the area of Sodom and Gomorrah, a region noted for its wickedness (cf. 13:13).
17. The wicked Sodomites formed an alliance with the kings of four other cities that were located in the plain of Jordan: Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar (14:2, 3).
18. Four of these kings are named, but not the fifth king. He is referred to as "the king of Bela, which is Zoar" (14:2; cf. 13:10).
19. Zoar is the name of the city to which Lot escaped from Sodom (Genesis 19:22, 30). Here in Genesis 14:2 we are told that its former name was Bela.
20. Matthew Henry said the king of Bela's name is not mentioned "either because he was much more mean and inconsiderable, or because he was much more wicked and inglorious than the rest, and worthy to be forgotten."
21. Before moving on, it should be noted that God not only destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, but the other nearby cities as well (cf. Genesis 19:25, 28).
22. Deuteronomy 29:23 refers to "the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath."

II. LOT WAS TAKEN AND THEN WAS RESCUED

1. There were nine kings engaged in this battle -- "four kings with five" (14:9b).
2. Genesis 14:10 says, "And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there.." The dirty, slimy Sodomites were slipping and sliding in the slimepits, while some soldiers "fled to the mountain" (14:10b).
3. John Phillips wrote, "There seems to be a poetic justice in it all. Sodom and Gomorrah were vile and filthy beyond words. Their sin was a stench in the nostrils of God. It was fitting that their kings should be hauled off to captivity all besmirched and bedaubed with slime. Filthy they were within, and filthy they were without, a spectacle to men and angels, mute evidence that God is not mocked" (*Exploring Genesis*).
4. The king of Elam and his allies "took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way" (14:11). But in addition to taking all the goods and all the victuals, the invaders grabbed Lot (14:12).
5. A man who had managed to escape came and told "Abram the Hebrew" (14:13) that Lot was taken captive. At this time, Abraham was living in the plain of Mamre the Amorite.

6. Some men would have responded by saying, "Well, that's too bad for Lot! It's his own fault, he should never have moved to Sodom," etc.
7. But when Abraham heard that Lot was taken captive, he quickly sprang into action. He armed his trained servants, born in his own house (318 men), and pursued them unto Dan, which was over 100 miles north (14:14).
8. Abraham wisely divided his army into separate companies, allowing him to smite his adversaries from different locations (14:15).
9. When we think of great soldiers we often think of Joshua or David, but here we see Abraham was a skillful soldier also.
10. Abraham and his men pursued their foes beyond the limits of Palestine, up to Hobah, which was near the city of Damascus.
11. We also know from verse 24 that Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, Amorite chieftains and friends of Abraham, helped him in the rescue attempt (cf. 14:13, 24).
12. The fact that Abraham had 318 armed men living with him implies that he had at least a thousand people living with him, when you include women and children.
13. Furthermore, Genesis 13:2 tells us Abraham "was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold."
14. Abraham was a great man. And he was a brave and courageous man. He did not hesitate to organize his trained men. Speedily they went and rescued Lot and the other captives, and they recovered their goods as well (14:15, 16).
15. Sadly there is no mention of any expression of gratitude on the part of Lot, and we know from Genesis chapter 19 that Lot continued living in the wicked city of Sodom.

III. ABRAHAM MET MELCHIZEDEK

1. We have here in our text an interesting contrast. After Abraham's great victory, two very different kings went to meet him -- the wicked king of Sodom (all slimy from slipping around the slime pits -- 14:10) and the godly king of Salem. Both came to greet Abraham (14:17-24).
2. The Bible says that the Lord Jesus Christ is a priest not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek.
3. Melchizedek, the king of Salem (Jerusalem, according to Psalm 76:2), was both a priest and a king, and he is clearly a type of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Hebrews 7:1-4).
4. In the Bible, types are pictures. They are object lessons.
5. For example, our Lord said, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14).

6. Therefore, the serpent of brass was a type of Christ lifted up on the cross. But this does not alter the historical details (Numbers 21:5-9).
7. Melchizedek, the king of Salem, was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, but this does not mean he wasn't a literal priest and king.
8. Hebrews 7:2 says Melchizedek was "without father, without mother, without descent." This does not mean Melchizedek was the pre-incarnate Christ; it simply means he was a picture and type of Christ.
9. Albert Barnes said, "The genealogy of Melchizedek seems designedly veiled in impenetrable obscurity."
10. It was customary for all of the prominent men in the book of Genesis, such as Noah and Abraham and many others, to have their genealogies inscribed in the sacred record.
11. But in the case of Melchizedek, we do not have any reference to his genealogy, and so the writer of Hebrews (Paul?), inspired by the Holy Spirit, uses this notable omission to emphasize that Melchizedek was a type of Christ, our great high priest (Hebrews 7:2).
12. Melchizedek's introduction in the book of Genesis is very unusual, but it is also completely historical, as well as highly typical.
13. Melchizedek set before Abraham the bread and the wine (14:18), symbols of Christ's broken body and shed blood.
14. We often refer to Genesis 22 as a vivid picture of Calvary, but here we also see a prophetic glimpse of the cross. Today when we have the Lord's Supper, we look back to the cross. Here, Melchizedek and Abraham looked forward to it.
15. Our Lord said to the Jews in John 8:56, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad."
16. Melchizedek was the only person on earth whom Abraham recognized as his spiritual superior. Abraham's response to Melchizedek's visit was to "give him tithes of all" (14:20). Giving is an act of worship.
17. Many people think tithing started when God gave the law to Moses, but the first reference to tithing is found here in Genesis 14:20.
18. This tells us that tithing is not a legal requirement. Abraham tithed as an act of worship and we are to do likewise.
19. The principle of tithing goes back at least as far as Abraham. You could say it goes back to the creation week. God wants one day out of seven for Himself, and God wants at least one-tenth of our income.
20. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul says, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (I Cor. 16:2).
21. Therefore, the tithe is a bench mark. "As God hath prospered him."

22. W.H. Griffith Thomas said this reference to tithing suggests "the pre-Mosaic observance of this acknowledgment of God's claim on our gifts. If the principle of tithing was thus previous to the Mosaic economy there seems no reason to deny its essential fitness today in the economy of grace; the tenth being regarded as God's absolute right before any question arises about free-will offerings and other spontaneous gifts of the redeemed and grateful life" (*Genesis*).
23. The word "blessed" is used three times here (Genesis 14:19, 20). The Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35), and Abraham received his great blessing.
24. We come to church to receive a blessing, and to be a blessing to others. Those who miss church miss the blessing.
25. But some people are not a blessing to be with. Genesis 14:21 says, "And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself."
26. We see in Scripture that after a great victory there is often an attack from the devil. For example, after Elijah's great victory on Mount Carmel, wicked Queen Jezebel sent him a message threatening to kill him (I Kings 19:2).
27. Remember that right after our Lord was baptized in the Jordan River, He was tempted by the devil.
28. After Abraham's victorious rescue of Lot, the king of Sodom showed up. The king of Sodom told Abraham he could keep all the goods for himself (14:21), but Abraham wisely refused (14:22-24).
29. Abraham said to the king of Sodom, "I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, That I will not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich" (14:22, 23; cf. vss. 18-20).
30. Third John 7 says, "Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles." These believers were commended for carrying out their ministry without asking for assistance from the unsaved.
31. This is an important principle because worldly people often boast about the way they have assisted others. Abraham did not want the wicked king of Sodom to boast, "I have made Abram rich" (14:23b).
32. However, Abraham did make an allowance for the men who had assisted him in rescuing Lot (14:24). Abraham was a man with spiritual discernment.
33. Therefore, he knew he himself could not accept even a "shoe latchet" from the king of Sodom, but he also understood the others deserved their portion (14:24).

CONCLUSION:

1. There are many important lessons in Genesis 14. F.B. Meyer said what we have here in Genesis 14 is "the unselfish and successful interposition of a separated man, on the behalf of others."
2. "Abraham had watched the movements of the devastators from afar...Common prudence would have urged him not to embroil himself...and do not meddle" in the conflict.
3. "But true separation never argues thus. Granted that the separated one is set apart for God, yet he is set apart that he may react more efficiently on the great world over which God yearns, and towards which He has entertained great purposes of mercy, in the election of the few. Genuine separation -- an unattachedness to the things of time and sense, because of an ardent devotion to the unseen and eternal -- is the result of faith, which always works by love; and this love tenderly yearns for those who are entangled in the meshes of worldliness and sin. Faith makes us independent, but not indifferent. It is enough for it to hear that its brother is taken captive; and it will arm instantly to go in pursuit."
4. "Ah, brothers and sisters, have there never come to you the tidings that your brothers are taken captive? How, then, is it that you have not started off long ago for their deliverance? Is this separation genuine, which stands unconcernedly by while there is such need for immediate and unselfish action?" (*Abraham, or The Obedience Of Faith*).