

Genesis 14:17-24 After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). ¹⁸ And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said,

"Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
 Possessor of heaven and earth;
²⁰ and blessed be God Most High,
 who has delivered your enemies into your hand!"

And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. ²¹ And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself." ²² But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, ²³ that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.' ²⁴ I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share."

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Genesis 14:17-24 | Melchizidek

Last week we saw two different choices made by Abram and by Lot. Lot makes the choice guided by our natural eyes, and he chose to move to the more fertile land outside of Canaan. But Abram made the choice guided by the eyes of faith, to remain in Canaan, the promised land. It isn't much to look at but God lifted Abram's eyes to see a transcendent hope in his promise. So much of our faith is making this choice. To look beyond the immediate context, or conflict and pursue a higher obedience. The obedience of faith that shows our trust in the Lord.

In today's text these choices bear out as the land that looked full of flourishing turns out to be hostile. Lot is captured by an enemy and Abram goes to rescue Lot. It's a story that involves kings, and alliances broken and battles waged and a miraculous victory with only 318 soldiers. But none of this international intrigue and war is the point of this text, it's all just background for that same choice that Abram is faced with once again, to live by the eyes of flesh or to walk by faith in the Lord's promises.

Today we'll see the story of Abram's miraculous victory, and his choice between the king of Sodom and the King of Righteousness. Once again we will be shown the centrality of faith.

1. Lot's Capture, Abram's Rescue

Genesis 14:11-12 So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. ¹² They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.

The land Lot chose to live was comprised of 9 kingdoms which were all absorbed under one kingdom unfortunately called Chedorlaomer. The kingdoms lived with this arrangement for 12 years. In the thirteenth year 5 of the kingdoms attack to try and throw off the leadership of Chedorlaomer. Chedorlaomer strikes back, defeating the 5 kingdoms and reestablishing their rule. The results are the above verse. They capture Sodom and Gamorrah and in the midst of this, Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions are captured.

Abram receives word of his nephews capture and goes to rescue. He gathers together the 318 men of his household and they pursue the enemy and defeat them. It is an incredibly unlikely victory with such small numbers of men, and they likewise free the King's of Sodom and Gomorrah and retrieve their possessions resulting in the below verse.

Genesis 14:16 Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.

Abram takes his kingly responsibility over the land and uses it to rescue his kinsmen from a cruel oppressor. It is an act of courage and camaraderie, but more than that it is an act of faith in the calling to which Abram has been called. He is acting like a king, by faith. A king of justice and mercy. After this great victory Abram is known in the land and is met by two kings in the valley of the Kings. This is the center of today's text, the meeting with the two kings. The king of Sodom, and Melchizedek which means King of Righteousness. First the King of Sodom.

2. King of Sodom

Genesis 14:17 the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

The Kings' valley. Some of you have been there. This is where you get offers for your life to be changed for just a little compromise. Jesus describes this place in his parable of the soils. Its the seed that is cast among thorns;

Mark 4:19 but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

Abram is going to get an offer here, and the danger is that it might choke the word. The glorious promise that Abram might be made the father of nations is offered to him on a clear pathway by the King of Sodom who makes him a shrewd offer.

Genesis 14:21 And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself."

At face value the offer is harmless. Abram had accomplished a great victory, and part of the spoil would surely be his due from the king whom he set free. But look at how this changes the color of Abram's choice to wage war to set Lot free. If he takes the spoil, he becomes a mercenary. The just war would become unjust.

Secondly, if he takes the spoil he becomes indebted and bound to the king of Sodom. There is an alliance made between two kings. And Abram could make sense of it. "Perhaps this is the way that God intended to give me this land, by building up my power by me waging these mercenary wars." Abram resists the temptation of the king of Sodom, and instead chooses not the way of immediate gain but of sacrifice to another king, Melchizedek. Thankfully the king who spoke first.

3. Melchizedek

Genesis 14:18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.)

Melchizedek means, King of Righteousness, and he is the king of Salem, which means peace. This is literally the king of Jerusalem what will one day be the capital city of the united kingdom of Abram's descendants. What will one day be the place of our Lord's sacrifice. And the text tells us that not only is he a king, he is a priest of God Most High.

If this king of righteousness seems like a mysterious person then you're reading the text appropriately. Where did this king come from? Why haven't we heard about him before? What is his lineage? When did he live, when did he die? How does he know the Lord?

Let's look look at the interaction, he brings a feast of bread and wine to Abram, and he offers to him a blessing from the Lord.

Genesis 14:19-20 "Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
²⁰ and blessed be God Most High,
who has delivered your enemies into your hand!"

The blessing is directly regarding Abram's victory. But it is not about Abram, it is about God Most High. He focuses not on the blessed, but on the blesser. God has all of heaven and earth, possessor, maker. And he blesses the Lord.

The Lord is the one who accomplished this victory. The Lord is the one who makes nations rise and fall. The Lord is the one who has all things, who makes kings, who distributes his goods as he sees fit. As a priest Melchizedek brings the word of the Lord to Abram, and receives Abram's worship of the Lord.

Genesis 14:20 And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Abram receives this blessing of the Lord as an opportunity to praise the Lord and demonstrate his worship by offering a sacrifice of a tenth of all of Abram's possessions.

The tithe, which means tenth, is an offering that is placed into law for the Israelites to give to the priesthood in the line of Aaron. The Aaronic priesthood. (Isn't it Aaronic, dontcha think?) As recorded in Deuteronomy 14. This tithe was delivered to the priests, and counted as an offering to the Lord. This same practice extends through the New Testament such that churches are supported by the members. Giving of your finances to the church is an act of worship, and it is an act of obedience. This worship, steels Abram's heart against the temptation to make himself king by garnering possessions for himself, and provides him with the very language by which he resists the king of Sodom.

Genesis 14:22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, ²³ that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.'

As we discussed earlier the good reasons for Abram resisting, look at how he borrows the very language from Melchizedek. God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth. You see, Abram denies the gift that the King of Sodom would offer him, and instead offers the sacrifice of the tithe to God most high. He can do this in full confidence because he knows who God is. God is the possessor of everything, he will have no loss. And God has laid upon him this particular calling of kingship that only God can bestow.

In the valley of the kings, Abram remains loyal to the king of kings.

But we still haven't answered those questions about Melchizedek in his only scene in scripture. Like Alec Baldwin in Glengarry Glenross. In the most often quoted Psalm in the New Testament, Melchizedek is mentioned.

Psalm 110:4 "You are a priest forever
after the order of Melchizedek."

The writer of Hebrews shows us that this is referring to Christ the Lord. All of that missing information about Melchizedek is meant to point us towards someone more transcendent. As the writer of Hebrews shows.

Hebrews 7:3 He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.

What is left unsaid about Melchizedek is beyond comprehension with Christ, who is the eternal son of God. While the glory of Melchizedek is in receiving the sacrifice of the offering from Abram the father of faith. The Glory of Christ is shown in being the offering for us even the offering for Abram.

Hebrews 7:25 Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

So let us meet in the valley of Kings. What are you being offered? What if instead you worshipped the one who gave himself for you?