

In the Beginning, God...

The Thread of Redemption

Two Kings Two Kingdoms

Genesis 14:17–24 (ESV) 17 After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom (Bera v.2 ‘son of evil’) went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley).

18 And Melchizedek (Melek’ King/Monarch sedeq’ right or righteousness) king of Salem (peace) 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 (Abram’s allies in the fight) take their share.”

Introduction

In chapter 13 and the first part of this chapter Moses deals with Abram and Lot, now we will see Abram’s interaction with two distinct and very different kings.

Bera the king of Sodom, Genesis 14:2 these kings made war with Bera king of Sodom, and Melchizedek. And of all the encounters of God’s men in the Bible, one of the most mysterious is Abram and the king of ancient Jerusalem.

Do not miss an important subplot to this narrative. Abram was called by God alone back at Ur of the Chaldees. He did not leave alone, he did not arrive alone, but now, after this final rescue of his nephew, Lot returns to live at Sodom and Abram is now alone.

God deals with a man as an individual not as a family nor as a clan, and Abram is now where God has intended that he be all along.

It is at this moment that Abram encounters two distinct kings. One of this earth, and one of heavenly origin.

That distinction is important. God calls Abram to separate from his family, go in search of a land that God will reveal, but Abram continues with his brother's son and all those Lot brought with him.

God calls you and me to separate from the world, and its allure. We are called to be holy, separate and distinct from all others.

I believe that's a problem with the modern church today. We have services that are constructed and programed to appeal to the lost mind of man. We have music that can cross over from "Christian" to secular. There seems to be a move away from distinction in our world today but just as He did with Abram, God is at work in His church today.

There are moments when His people see something different in what He wants and what the world is telling us that we should have.

Message:

1. King #1; Bera king of Sodom - ‘Son of Evil’

He and the other four kings of the Jordan valley, all living close to the Dead Sea - Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela or (Zoar) rebelled against Chedorlaomer king of Elam.

Genesis 14:4 (ESV) 4 Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

You might recognize Susa from the book of Daniel which is one of the cities of ancient Elam and it is where Daniel is buried.

Located in Persia (modern Iran) Elam was a very influential nation that impacted many of the empires mentioned in scripture.

This king was what came to be known as a ‘Suzerainty king’. This king would make alliances with weaker states, in order to accumulate more power. As his power grew, so did his influence over the region.

Chedorlaomer was a very powerful king to have extended his authority from ancient Iran over in to the Jordan valley. And Lot was by pure chance the recipient of his wrath and anger, when the five kings of the Jordan valley rebelled against his ruling.

God uses the acts of men to accomplish His purpose in this world.

And these acts, the defiance of the rebel kings and retaliation of the suzerain king will serve to make Abram's name great.

Genesis 14:12–16 (ESV) 12 They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.

13 Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner. These were allies of Abram.

14 When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

15 And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. 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 will travel close to 400 miles in a very short period of time. He will defeat the five kings who have dominated the region, for years and return the people and things stolen, along with his nephew Lot and Lot's family.

This is a striking victory which sets Abram up as a force and name to be reckoned within the Jordan valley region of Canaan.

As a result Bera the king of Sodom comes to Abram in tribute.

Genesis 14:17. . .21 (ESV) 17 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). . . 21 And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself."

It is here that a mysterious character out of biblical history enters the narrative and before Abram could respond—another king stepped into the scene.

2. King #2 Melchizedek king of Salem (Melek = king, zedek = righteousness)

Hebrews 7:3 (ESV) 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.

Genesis 14:18–20 (ESV) 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,

You are an observant people, and you no doubt notice the bread and the wine being served. It brings my attention forward by two thousand years or so when Jesus serves bread and wine to His disciples. Do you notice the parenthetical statement, "He was priest of God most High?"

This is a beautiful foreshadowing of our communion service.

“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.

The Old Testament reveals three offices ordained by God, the Prophet - Priest - King.

Each office required a special anointing by God and a dispensation from God to the one anointed, which empowered him to serve and carry on the duties of the office.

The prophet represented God to humanity. Preaching truth, revealing the future, warning God’s people.

The priest represented humanity to God. Preaching truth, uncovering God’s revealed message, interceding for those in need of God’s provision or protection.

And the king ruled humanity under God. Thus we see Melchizedek filling each role just as Christ.

In Christ the role of prophet has already been fulfilled. We see His prophetic ministry in the context of the gospels (Matt. 21:11, Lk. 7:16, Jn. 1:18, 4:19, Heb. 1:1-2).

It is now that we see His ministry as a priest current and on going (Rom. 8:34, Heb. 4:14-16, 7:24-27) . But He will be king in the future, when all of God’s plans are culminated in Christ (Rev. 19:11-16).

So, this mysterious character is king of righteousness, king of peace, blessing Abram before the Lord and blessing the Lord as the true victor of Abram's deliverance of those who were captured.

Conclusion

The narrative ends with a striking contrast. Abram refuses the wealth of Sodom but freely gives to the king of Salem.

Bera—the king of Sodom—offers Abram the riches of the world:

“Take the goods for yourself.”

Melchizedek—king of righteousness—offers Abram nothing material, yet receives from Abram the tithe.

What had Melchizedek done for Abram?

Nothing visible. Nothing measurable.

Yet Abram recognizes divine authority and responds with worship.

The world rewards according to performance.

God blesses according to promise.

Bera represents the world's system—riches with strings attached, alliances built on self-interest, the subtle lure of worldly gain. Bera wanted Abram's affection, influence, and partnership.

But Abram would have none of it.

He raises his hand and declares:

“I will not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’”
—Genesis 14:22–23

Abram refuses to let the world claim credit for what God alone has done. He refuses enrichment that comes at the cost of compromise. He refuses the subtle chains of worldly partnership.

Instead, he honors God by honoring God’s king and priest.