**MELCHIZEDEK BLESSES ABRAM**

(Abram refused to play the Game of Thrones)

November 19, 2017

Genesis 14:1-24

Key verse 14:19,20 “and he blessed Abram, saying, ‘Blessed be Abram by God most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High who delivered your enemies into your hand.’”

Last week we learned in chapter 13 that we must learn to make choices based on God’s promises, not on human calculations. Lot made a decision based on his smart mind. His decision resulted in tragedy in today’s passage. We also learn how God helped Abram to make the right decision, overcoming a spiritual crisis in the time of victory. Sometimes we think of Abram as a weak, vague old man who had to live by faith because he had few human abilities. But in this chapter we see another side of Abram. He was an able man and he could have been a world leader, had he chosen that life for himself. He was an able general who earned the respect of kings. But more importantly, he was a man of God, and he had a great shepherd heart. This chapter is about a time in his life when he was successful and the temptation to become a worldly man was very strong.

**First**, the battle of the kings (1-16). Chapter 14 begins by showing that the land God promised to give to Abram was strongly contested by many kings. These days the same land is being fought over by the Israelites and Palestinians, the Lebanese and the Syrians and the Sunnis against Shiites. In Abram’s day, King Kedorlaomer, king of Elam which is present day Iran, was leader of the most powerful alliance of kings. For 12 years his alliance of four kings demanded tribute from five weaker kings. In the 13th year the 5 kings who lived in the vicinity of the Dead Sea (including the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah) attempted to break free from King Kedorlaomer. One year later the rebellion of the five kings led to a major battle between the 4 kings and the five kings. The end result was that the five kings were soundly smashed. The Bible mentions this because Lot who just left Abram in chapter 13 became a prisoner of war.

Let’s look at the circumstances under which Lot was living when he was captured. Look at verses 11,12. “The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away. They also carried off Abram’s nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom.” Now compare chapter 14:12 with chapter 13:12: “Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom.” Lot first only wanted to live near this city filled with men sinning greatly against the Lord. As we may know being near sinning is never enough. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:33 “Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character.” Living in Sodom made Lot into a constantly compromising closet Christian. The Bible teaches in Galatians 6 that a man reaps what he sows. The direction Lot chose caused him to reap being captured and all his possessions taken away. Lot left Abram to find more freedom and to increase his wealth. Because he left for the wrong reason he lost his freedom and all his wealth. What happened to Lot should be a warning to us. We must be careful that we do not find ourselves slowly drifting away from Bible loving people and into the company of God-hating people. We can learn from Lot’s mistake. Let us examine ourselves and see if we are drifting away from God and into this world. If so let us repent and come back into the loving fold of Jesus our good Shepherd.

Verse 13 now begins to turn us back to Abram. “One who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew.” Abram did not say, “I told him not to go to Sodom. Now he has to reap what he sowed. There is nothing I can do. How can I fight against the most powerful king? I am powerless.” Look at verse 14: “When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out 318 trained men born in his household and went into pursuit as far as Dan.” We see Abram called up his own private army. He organized it into one of history’s greatest hostage rescue operations. Criticism, faultfinding and finger pointing didn’t even come to Abram’s mind. Saving Lot at all cost and by any means was the only matter that Abram was concern with. He did not worry about the size of his men. How can he fight against Kedorlaomer who may have tens of thousands of soldiers? It was like a suicide.

Abram often figuratively represents Jesus. Lot figuratively represents sinners like us Jesus was sent to save. Like Lot we deserve all the bad things that happen to us. From this chapter we see when we call on Jesus for help either because of our sins or mistakes; he doesn’t sit up in heaven with a critical finger pointing back to us: “You are getting what your sins deserve.” Colossians 1:13 says, “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.” Jesus came into world to rescue us from our dark situation just as Abram went to rescue Lot. When we place our faith in Jesus, the life changing power of Jesus drives the darkness from our life.

Verses 15 and 16 give us a detailed report on Abram’s rescue operation. He attacked at night, using skillful military strategy. The enemy soldiers were totally surprised, and they were thoroughly routed. However, a large group escaped, and taking Lot with them, they continued their retreat. But Abram did not give up. Abram pursued them and again caught them at Hobah, north of Damascus. He recovered everything and brought back all the people and goods which Kedorlaomer had taken.

Abram came back from the battle of the kings as a conquering general. He had gone to war simply to rescue Lot, but in the course of doing this, he had defeated the most powerful king in the whole region. He could have regarded his victory as God’s sign to him to possess the whole land. God had indeed promised him all these lands earlier. He could have said, “Perhaps God is giving me the land he promised me. Maybe this is the time for me to change my lifestyle and live like a king.” It was a time of spiritual crisis for Abram. It was a time of a great temptation. He was greatly tempted to take the Iron Throne and ruled the whole region. Let’s see how God helped Abram overcome this time of temptation.

**Second**, Abram studies the Bible with Melchizedek (17-24). Two kings came to meet Abram when he returned from this successful military campaign. They were king of Sodom and king of Salem. One king represented the world; the other represented the simple tent life God had called him to live. They symbolized the choice that lay before Abram. Abram had a conference first with Melchizedek. Look at verse 18: “Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High.” Melchizedek was king of Salem. His name means “King of righteousness.” Salem means “peace.” He was king of righteousness and king of peace. He was priest of God Most High. His visit and his blessing taught Abram two things. First he reminded Abram of God’s friendship. He came with bread and wine to strengthen Abram, who must have been physically and emotionally exhausted. They ate the meal together and shared spiritual fellowship.

Second, and most important, he came with God’s word and God’s blessing. Look at verses 19-20: “and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” Melchizedek’s blessing has two parts: First, he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator (Possessor) of heaven and earth.” The word “Creator” has the same meaning as “Possessor.” This blessing reminds Abram that God is the Possessor of heaven and earth and everything else. He is the One who can give us everything. Why become greedy for a few material things when one can have everything. When God blesses, we are truly blessed. The worldly things for which we strive cannot make us happy even if we succeed in obtaining them.

Second, Melchizedek said, “Praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” This blessing reminds Abram that his victory over the kings was only won by God’s grace. According to military analysis and news accounts, they would conclude that it must have been Abram’s courage, audaciousness, and his small but highly elite soldiers through which he won the victory against the kings. Using this information maybe Abram should change his life and be king. On the other hand according to God’s word just given it was actually God Most high who delivered his enemies into his hands. In other words the battle is the Lord’s. It was the Lord who empowered and blessed Abram to defeat the kings and rescue Lot. God’s word revealed to Abram the humbling revelation God deserves all praise and glory for the victory. God’s word also informs Abram it was only by the grace of God he won this great victory. Melchizedek did not say explicitly but he is saying that Abram should give up all the spoils of the war which could have been millions of dollars and go back to the simple tent life God called him to live. Melchizedek said that God would fulfill his promise in another way.

How did Abram react to Melchizedek’s words? Look at verse 20b: “Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.” This was Abram’s way to acknowledge that he accepted Melchizedek’s words. Abram’s tithe represented the commitment of his heart and life to God Most High, the Creator and Possessor of all things. Christians apply this practically by at least giving to God a tenth of their earnings. It is God who gives us the power to earn our wealth. Someone once said that a man’s heart is where his pocketbook is. We should learn from Abram to give our tithes and offerings to God as a symbol of our commitment to him. Our tithing should be an act of worship.

Thus ended Abram’s brief Bible study with Melchizedek. No sooner did it end, we find Abram is faced with an opportunity to apply the word of God he just studied. Look at verse 21: The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself.” This seems reasonable. What harm could this do? After all it was Abram who used his wealth and servants to conquer the kings. Let us see how Abram responded to king of Sodom’s proposition. Look at verses 22-24. Abram applied the very same words he learned from Melchizedek in his brief Bible study with him. “I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Creator (Possessor) of heaven and earth.” God’s word empowered him to overcome this wicked king’s temptation. God’s word gave him eyes to see if he took even a thread or the thong of a sandal from this king, then this most wicked of kings and not God Most High could take some of the credit for Abram’s wealth. Some people will compromise their whole career for a few dollars. God’s word empowered Abram not to compromise even if it meant losing millions of dollars.

God had sent Abram a shepherd, Melchizedek, to help him in a time of spiritual crisis, and Abram received God’s word from him and overcome the temptation to compromise with the world and acquire the tainted riches of Sodom. Here we learn that Abram was a humble man. Melchizedek was a king of Salem, a small city. On the other hand, Abram was a conqueror who defeated the most powerful king at that time. How easy it could have been for Abram to be proud and reject Melchizedek’s word as presumptuous! Actually many people justify their sinful desires, saying, “If God comes to me and tells me what to do, I would listen. But I would not listen to any man.” But Abram listened to Melchizedek, a priest of God Most High.

Eric Liddell who was featured in the movie “Chariots of Fire,” won 1924 Summer Olympics in Paris in 400 meters. Originally he was supposed to run in 100 meters, but it was scheduled on a Sunday. So he refused to run. He was Scotland’s only hope of winning an Olympic gold medal. This made the Scottish people very upset with Eric. They wrote bad things about him in the newspaper. Some people even called him a traitor. Eric knew his chance of winning the 400-meter race was slim because two of the runners in this race had set world record times. In addition, on the day of the race, Eric was assigned the worst lane. But a note in his pocket encouraged him. The team trainer had given it to him before he left his hotel room. It read, “He who honors Him, He (God) will honor.” Liddell knew his decision not to run on Sunday honored God. He won the gold medal with a new world record. Eric received a hero’s welcome when he returned home. The newspapers now tried to outdo each other praising him. But after his victory, he did not seek glory and fame by appearing in many commercials. He went to China as a missionary, and died in a Japanese prison camp by brain tumor.

Jesus says in Matthew 7:13,14. “Wide is the road that leads to destruction and narrow the road that leads to life.” The road to life without Jesus and his word is all but impossible for us to travel on. But thank God for giving us Jesus and his Word just as He gave to Abram Melchizedek and his word. Today let us fix our eyes on Jesus by faith and his word. When we do, we will take hold of the hand of God who will walk with us down the narrow road to life, and we can overcome all the temptations; temptation in the time of despair, temptation in the time of victory, so that we may always live according to God’s will.