

A Challenge and a Choice

Genesis 14:16-24

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As Abraham settled into the land of Canaan, a regional conflict broke out involving nine kings. Abraham's nephew, Lot, became a casualty of this conflict ... he was taken prisoner of war. For Abraham, this conflict had now turned personal and he entered the battle to deliver Lot from the hands of his captors. Abraham defeated his enemies and set Lot free. On the way home from his decisive victory, Abraham was faced with a very subtle attack. This attack came in the form of an offer from one presenting himself as a friend. This enticing offer would challenge Abraham's commitment to God. It would require him to make a choice that would impact him for the rest of his life.

Dramatic Contrast between Two Kings

At this point in the story, two kings enter the picture and the contrast between them is dramatic. One of the kings was the King of Sodom, and the other was the King of Salem. We read in Genesis 14:17-18, *The king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him. Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High.* The word, "Sodom" is translated as "burnt or scorched." The "King of Sodom" means the "King of Hell" and is associated with evil. On the other hand, the word "Salem" is translated as "peace." The "King of Salem" means the "King of Peace" and is associated with God.

It is interesting to note that "Salem" is the ancient site of what would one day become the city of Jerusalem. The King of Salem was Melchizedek and he refers to himself as a priest of the Most High God. The priesthood of Melchizedek is a fore-shadow, or type, of the High Priesthood of Jesus. Notice, the priesthood of Melchizedek precedes the Levitical priesthood established in the Mosaic Law. His priesthood is also mentioned in the book of Hebrews as being a type of Christ.

A Principle of Spiritual Warfare

As we will see in just a moment, the King of Sodom represents the devil himself. Abraham is reveling in his victory over his enemies when the King of Sodom approaches him with a subtle offer. Abraham will be required to make a life-defining choice.

We must never lose sight of the fact that there are fundamental principles that govern spiritual warfare. One of the first principles is that we will never gain a victory over our enemy without having to first make a choice at a very practical level of our lives. Our spiritual enemy will always seek to neutralize our recent victories. After a victory in one area, he very subtly will seek to gain a new point of entry into our lives in order to take another area captive. We have all said on the heels of answered prayer ... "I'm glad that's over! Thank you, Lord!" Then, almost immediately, we find ourselves in the midst of a new challenge. We find ourselves saying, "What's going on ... now this ... will this never end?" The truth of the matter is that on this side of Heaven our spiritual battles will never end.

A Choice of Commitment

At first glance in this passage, it appears that these two kings are moving simultaneously towards Abraham, but a closer look will reveal that Abraham met with Melchizedek, King of Salem, first. The meeting between Abraham and Melchizedek does not give us any details as to their conversation. However, after the meeting, Abraham's decision regarding his commitment and devotion to God is revealed. We read of Abraham's meeting in Genesis 14:18-20, *Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all.*

When Melchizedek met with Abraham, he brought bread and wine to the meeting. Immediately we are reminded that these are the very elements that Jesus would use to establish the New Covenant with His Church. Approximately 2,200 years before Jesus was born, we see a perfect picture of Christ; the Cross; and the New Covenant. The picture is complete with the elements of the "Lord's Supper." The elements portray the Lord's death on the Cross and point us to the coming of the New Covenant.

The meeting took place just a few miles from where Jesus would die on the Cross where He would openly defeat the devil and overrule hell's agenda against mankind. At the heart of the meeting between Melchizedek and Abraham was worship. We are not privy to the words that were exchanged between Abraham and Melchizedek. However, we do know the result of their exchange ... Abraham lifted his hands in worship and reaffirmed his commitment and devotion to God. Abraham then gave a tangible expression of his worship to God when he gave Melchizedek his tithe. Abraham's devotion and commitment to God was far more than lip-service ... it was tangible.

The Powerful Weapon of Worship

In this story we will discover that "worship" is a powerful weapon that will effectively counter the subtle attacks of the enemy. In Genesis 14:21, we read of the offer the King of Sodom will make to Abraham, *Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself."* Listen to the subtle and enticing offer from the King of Sodom... "Abraham, I'll let you keep all of the spoils of your victory if you will just give me the people." Abraham knew that if he accepted this offer, he would become very rich, but he also knew that hidden in this offer was a ploy to gain control over the people Abraham had released from captivity. Here is a truth of spiritual warfare ... the devil will let you have your way, if you will yield control to him.

The devil tempts us by taunting us ...

You can be popular ... Just surrender your character!

You can have that relationship ... Just surrender your morality!

You can have your career promotion ... Just surrender your integrity!

You can have your own way ... Just surrender your commitment to God!

Abraham countered this pagan king's offer with a firm declaration of his unwavering commitment to God in Genesis 14:22, *Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.'"* Abraham made it clear to the King of Sodom where he stood:

*I've already made my choice!
I've already lifted my hands to my God!
I'm going with God and I'm going to live my life His way!
I will not let you make me rich on your terms!*

Abraham's **prior commitment to God** enabled him to successfully counter the tempting offer from the King of Sodom. The devil will always offer us what he thinks we want, but he will *always* require us to surrender to his terms. Don't ever forget that the devil's terms will *always* give him control over us!

BE ON ALERT!

- *After winning a spiritual victory, don't let your guard down.*
- *Watch for subtle attacks from your enemy that will seek the compromise of your convictions and commitments.*
- *Watch for new "points of entry" from your enemy.*
- *Choose to spend a portion of every day in worship.*
- *Recommit yourself to living according to God's ways as you worship.*
- *Worship will enable you to answer your enemy's offer with ...*

"I have already made my choice!" ...

"I will not allow you to meet my needs!" ...

"I will not allow you to fulfill my desires on your terms!" ...

"I belong to God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth!"