

THE KING OF SODOM

Genesis 14:17, 21-24

INTRODUCTION

In the vast majority of all of humanity, with very few exceptions, all human beings have an understanding of right and wrong, of good and evil. The definitions with which people define these two vary depending on their worldview.

Sodom and Salem – these are similar sounding, but worlds apart ... including what they stand for in Scripture:

- all things material vs. all things spiritual
- perversion and peace
- rebellion and righteousness
- true wickedness and true worship
- unbelievers and believers
- lawlessness and righteousness
- darkness and light
- belial and Christ

The one is the Darkness of Perversion. The other the Dove of Peace. Sodom and Salem.

We have here two kings, representing two kingdoms, two totally different types of men representing two distinct ways of life.

Both of these men are Canaanites. The difference is one has been saved by God's grace and the other has not. One serves God and the other serves the flesh.

READ Gen 14:17-24

Every word of Scripture is infinitely precious and sweet. This is good stuff. This is monumental. There is so much truth and doctrine packed into these short verses.

We are going to unpack this in a Hebrew fashion – we will look at vv. 17, 21-24 today and then circle back to vv. 18-20 next week.

Proposition: After Abram's Victory:

- I. His **Right** to the Spoils
- II. His **Refusal** of the Spoils

So That:

- I. His **Right** to the Spoils **Gen 14:17, 21**

Point – Just Recompense / Temptation

- with the culture of that time, there would be nothing inherently wrong with taking the spoils
- he had a military victory over the four kings - just recompense
- however, Abram also realizes there is a temptation there - he is not just viewing things at the material/physical level
- he has a spiritual lens that he is looking through - God's perspective

Proof – ^{“17a”} **Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him,”**

Gen 4:1-16 - God inserts **Abram** right in the middle of **World War I**.

- Abram put his own life on line and went to rescue Lot
- this is the **Abram** of the Promised Land - courageous and commanding
- **sacrificial response**

Abram emerges out of nowhere, comes out of Ur, moves over 1000 miles to the land of promise, becomes a general in his 80's, and wins World War I.

Proof – “defeat” – F/ hkn – means to smite, strike, beat, or kill →
this is not a partial victory → one translation reads “slaughter”

Proof – “^{17b}the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley).”

“the king of Sodom” – introduced to him by name **Bera** (v. 1) - his name means ‘man of evil’ or ‘son of evil’

- the last we had seen Bera, he had fallen in the tar pit (**14:10**).

“the valley of Shaveh” – confluence of the Hinnom and Kidron valleys, south of the City of David (modern day Jerusalem)

“(that is, the King’s Valley)” – explanation to Moses’ audience

“(that is, ...)” **14:2, 3, 7, 8, 17** => when Moses wrote this, the land had changed from the time of Abram. 600-700 years in between the happenings with Abram and the time of Moses.

Now jump to verse 21 ...

“²¹And the king of Sodom said to Abram, ‘Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.’”

Bera is going to the one who defeated the one who defeated him. He is in an incredible position of weakness.

It is very likely **Bera** is standing there with his men waiting while **Melchizedek** gives his blessing.

But if **Bera**, the king of Sodom, was listening, the message didn’t penetrate his heart. He was thinking of the spoils.

- Maybe he was too busy trying to wipe the tar off of his sleeves
- He says ...just give me my people and keep the stuff. “Take the booty!”

Bera is expecting Abram to respond the way he would react.

- He is appealing to what is the desire of the unregenerate man or woman – wealth and reputation, without the sacrifice of either.

Application - This is a life lesson. People aren't going to react the way you will react. That can be positive or negative.

We already know the spiritual condition of Sodom

13:13 – “Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD.”

Abram's more difficult battle begins after his battle with the four **kings**. The conflict he faces with the **King of Sodom** is far more critical than the war he waged with the four kings.

- This is part of the development of the faith of Abram
- We see the faith of Abram in chapters 12-14 developing up to his meeting with the **King of Sodom** and the more important **King of Salem**.

II. His Refusal of the Spoils **Gen 14:22-24**

Point – Abram essentially says I don't want any of your people. I don't want any of your stuff. Go back to Sodom. Take your people. And take your stuff. And go home.

Proof – “²²And Abram said to the king of Sodom, ‘I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth,’”

“I have sworn to the LORD God Most High”

- **literally** - “I have raised my hand to *YHWH El Elyon*”

Hands in the Bible are strongly symbolic.

- they are used to describe the deeds and actions that represent the fruit of our lives - what is in our heart - either good or bad
- the work of one's hands -> The **fruit of one's life** -> **worship**
- work (good) -> Deut 16:15; 24:19; 33:11; Ps 90:17

- work (bad) -> 2 Chr 34:25; Jer 25:14

Gen 5:29 – “This one shall give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands.”

Abram says, “I have lifted my hand to” **“I have sworn to”**
Whom? **“LORD God Most High”** – *YHWH El Elyon*

This is as **Melchizedek** spoke previously as he encouraged Abram - **“God Most High”** – *El Elyon*

- three times in three verses (vv.18-20), Melchizedek had said this *El Elyon* – The Most High - exalted above the Canaanite deities.
- Abram adds *YHWH*

“possessor of heaven and earth” – **possessing or creating**

The deities in Canaan at the time of Abram and at the time of Moses were linked to the creation. There was the deity of the river, the mountains, the rain, animals, etc. God is the Creator and Possessor of them all. **“God Most High”** distinguishes God from the Canaanite pagan deities in two ways:

1. ‘Most High’ - above them
2. He created and possesses them

This is a reminder to the original audience of the superiority of YHWH over the gods of their enemies.

A focus on the importance of God as Creator.

This is not a God who has much stuff.

This is not a God who has many riches.

This is not a God who has some resources.

This is the God who has who possesses all of heaven and earth.

Because his God is **“possessor of heaven and earth,”** as **Melchizedek** had said (v. 19) - Abram is content to let God provide without compromise.

Abram focuses on the giver rather than the gift and says, “No way!” He is content to sacrifice.

Illustration – Contrast this with Abraham’s experience in Egypt (ill-gotten gain). Abram in a period of weakness, wasn’t trusting God, and he took Sarai to Egypt. He lied to Pharaoh. Pharaoh took Sarai into his palace and heaped gifts on Sarai. Abram kept those gifts.

Application – How do we discern when a blessing is to be accepted and when it is to be rejected?

One thing you can ask: What is the motive of the giver?

- Contrast Deut 20:14 with vv.16-17 Answer? The difference is seen in vv. 15, 18.
- we have to put the spiritual lenses on to watch for the danger
- we have to be good biblical Bereans, studying the Word and applying the Truth to our lives
- When we make a seemingly neutral decision, is there a spiritual risk there? OR.....
- Is there another choice that will take me and my family and better usher them and shepherd them in the right direction to walking with God?

Two powerful observations of Abram’s Faith here as he refuses the spoils:

1st Observation.....

A. His Dedication

Point – Abram does this completely and with total thoroughness. He does not do this in a half-hearted, compromising kind of way. He is dedicated.

Proof – “^{23a}that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours,”

He doesn’t try to keep his foot in the door.

He doesn’t try to cut corners.

He says to the king: Take your people. And take your stuff. And go home. I don't want any of your people. I don't want any of your stuff. Go back to Sodom.

Proof – “**anything**” (v.23) and “**nothing**” (v.24)

Application – Sometimes we seem to think “**nothing**” means ‘not very much’. We might say, “Bera, that’s a very nice offer. It was yours originally, why don’t we split it half and half.”

To Abram here, “**nothing**” means “**nothing.**”

One of the weakness of the evangelical church today is we don’t have this kind of commitment.

Illustration – David Livingstone, pioneer missionary to Africa – walked over 29,000 miles. His wife died early in their ministry. He faced opposition from his Scottish brethren. He ministered half blind. He wrote this in his diary – *“Send me anywhere, only go with me. Lay any burden on me, only sustain me. Sever me from any tie but the tie that binds me to Your service and to Your heart.”*

Application – Fidelity. Till death do us part. Whatever our mission field - work, school, unsaved family etc -we must be dedicated as God has called us to those tasks.

2nd Observation ...

B. His Motivation

Point – What Abram desires most of all is the glory of God.

Abram determined to receive all from God and not “**a thread or a sandal thong**” from the wicked King of Sodom

Proof – “^{23b}**lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’”**

Abram desires to give credit where credit is due - to God

Abram is driven, not by wealth and reputation, but by the glory of God. He doesn't want a permanent stain on the legacy God has promised him.

Abram: I want people to know it is the “**LORD God Most High**” who has made me rich ... not a Sodomite.

- points back to what **Melchizedek** said – “blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” (14:20)

Psa 20:7 – “Some boast in chariots, and some in horses; But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God.”

Prov 21:31 – “The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But victory belongs to YHWH”

Illustration – Remember – Abram took the spoils from Egypt that he secured by a lie. Here he refuses what is rightfully and righteously his ... for the **glory of God**.

Application – Has there been anything in your life that has been your right. That has been your entitlement? That no one questions it is rightfully yours, that you have sacrificed to the Lord?

This is a penetrating question.

The problem in our society is the more we get, the more we have, the more we enjoy, the more we want.

The world might say “Talk is cheap.”

What do we do?

What do we sacrifice for the glory of God?

What have we willingly laid aside?

Do we have a love affair with life?

If God calls us into a dangerous part of the city to proclaim the gospel, are we willing?

We confess God is spiritual ... but do we place all things material above the spiritual?

A couple of footnotes ...

“²⁴**I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share.**”

Footnote #1: I can't give you back what my young men have eaten.

Footnote #2: I did have allies (14:13).

They have a right to take whatever they want.

Abram shifts the attention off of himself – first to God – then to others. He first focuses on God. But then he acknowledges his fellow soldiers.

Abram doesn't bind his fellow soldiers by his conscience. He is not a legalist.

We move from just recompense refused by Abram to just recompense received by his allies.

They are interrupted by the local king/chieftain

→ **Gen 14:18-20**

CONCLUSION

Abram chose **Salem** over **Sodom** ...

Abram first drew close to Salem before he drew away from Sodom. It was because Abram had been strengthened by the **King of Salem** that he was able to resist the lure of the **King of Sodom**.

Point – As an illustration, we can see Abram pictured as the kinsmen redeemer (World War I – 14:1-16)... who rescues Lot ... and out of nowhere comes ... Melchizedek.

Proof – “¹⁸**And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.** ¹⁹**And he blessed him and said, ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;** ²⁰**And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.’ And he gave him a tenth of all.”**

* King of Righteousness (*melek + tsedek*)

* **King of Salem** (King of Peace)

We will look at this passage in detail next week.

C.S .Lewis - *“When the author walks onto the stage, the play is over. God is going to invade, all right; but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else comes crashing in? This time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. That will not be the time for choosing; It will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realized it before or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side.”*