



OPENING COMMENT

Our cultural moment brings with it the danger of infusing its naturalistic presuppositions into our bible reading. Without even realizing it, we can skim over the names, places, and events and be struck by the natural chaos that surrounded the characters and just move on to the next interesting story. Yet, these stories actually speak of deeper realities and point forward to a more glorious future. The question is, do we have eyes to see who is being revealed?

READ THE TEXT:

In the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, ² these kings made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). ³ And all these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). ⁴ Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. ⁵ In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶ and the Horites in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the border of the wilderness. ⁷ Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh) and defeated all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hazazon-tamar.

⁸ Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out, and they joined battle in the Valley of Siddim ⁹ with Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings against five. ¹⁰ Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country. ¹¹ So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their



way. ¹²They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.

¹³Then 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. ¹⁴When 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. ¹⁵And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.

¹⁷After 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). ¹⁸And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) ¹⁹And he blessed him and said,

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

And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. ²¹And the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.” ²²But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have lifted my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, ²³that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ ²⁴I 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.”

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. What does the sequence of battles say about the different kings involved? (vs. 1-12)
2. What does verse 17 imply about Abram?
3. Melchizedek gives two blessings in his address. Who does he bless?
4. What is the primary concern of the King of Sodom?
5. Why does Abram refuse to take anything from the King of Sodom?
6. How does Abram make a distinction between himself and his allies? (vs 24)



APPLYING THE TEXT

1. The entire story of Genesis 14 is filled with typical military skirmishes of the Ancient Near East. From verse 17 onward Melchizedek acts as a foil to the King of Sodom. What are their opposing views of the circumstances described in the rest of the chapter?
2. How do these views compete in our current cultural setting?
3. In what areas of our lives are we more prone to think like the King of Sodom?
4. What practices might we put in place to help ourselves see the world more like Melchizedek?
5. Abram's tithe to Melchizedek seems misplaced because Melchizedek was not involved in the previous battles. What does Abram's tithe say about where we should be giving our tithes and offerings?
6. Abram ensures that the King of Sodom cannot take any credit for his success by returning all that belongs to the king. How might we enact this same attitude in our current work and social environments so as to bring glory to God?

BIBLICAL THREAD

1. Psalm 110 – David mentions Melchizedek's order of priesthood.
2. Zechariah 6:9-15 – Another prophetic text marrying priest and king.
3. Hebrews 5-8 – builds on Jesus as a priest that is better than Melchizedek.
4. Ephesians 1:20-23 – Christ seated at the right hand of God.
5. Philippians 2:5-11 – Christ's humiliation and glorification in one passage.
6. Revelation 5 – the Lamb of God is the only one worthy.
7. Revelation 19:11-16 – Jesus portrayed as the king of kings and Lord of Lords.

CONCLUSION

Even in the seeming chaos of inter-tribal warfare, God is at work revealing himself and pointing forward to a day when he will make all things right. Both Melchizedek and Abram understood this reality and acted accordingly. In so doing, both reveal the God's kingdom is characterized by a faith that is oriented toward bringing our creator the glory due his name regardless of the circumstances around us. Abram is not a perfect man perfectly exhibiting perfect faith, but in this moment he provides a great example of what faithful followers look like. Alongside his shining example, Melchizedek stands as a reminder that the priestly system embraced by the people of God through the Old Testament is a shadow of the true high priest to come. Even as God is establishing his relationship with a covenant people He is pointing towards something greater. This should remind us that our eyes and ears need to be attuned to what God is accomplishing in our lives as we struggle through the chaos that surrounds us.



SHARE & PRAY

LIFE GROUP VISION:

The goal to meeting together around the word of God is three fold. First, we want to more clearly understand what God is saying to us through his Word and apply it to our own hearts and minds. Secondly, we want to build a loving community with each other to disciple one another toward maturity in Christ. Thirdly, we desire each of us, as ambassadors of Christ, to look outwards to our community and ask how we can bring the truth of the gospel to bear on those whom God has placed in our lives.

