

Genesis 14: 17-24 – Abram’s Trial: Sodom or Salem

Whyttock, Pulpit, PASN, TSK, HebrewLexicon, Geneva, Trapp, Henry, Delitzsch, Leupold, Poole,

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: God used Abram to rescue the foolish Lot. Abram was the tool of the rescue, but God was the source of that rescue. But the real issue was not about Lot. It was whether Abram would endure the test of showing love to his foolish, selfish nephew? Abram passed that test. He passed it well. Abram used his wealth, his soldiers, and even used his relationships with his allies to rescue foolish Lot.

But tests never end – not while you have life in your body. Tests from God are for your strengthening – for the strengthening of your faith. So following the test of showing love to the foolish, Abram faced 2 other tests. How would he respond when he faced the tests posed by two different kings?

Our headings are: **Abram’s Test with the King of Salem**, and **Abram Tests with the King of Sodom**.

Our goals are: **That whatever the test you must go through, you will remember that you are rich in Christ and equipped to face them without compromising, and as you respond to your tests you will show that Christ is your guide and the supplier of everything you need.**

Abram’s Test with the King of Salem

17 And 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. 18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High.

1. As the king of Sodom went out to meet Abram and thank him for rescuing him and his people, Melchizedek also went out to meet Abram.

2. Who was Melchizedek? The name Melchizedek is a combination of 2 words. Melech – king. Zekdek – righteousness. So he is properly called the king of righteousness. This was a spiritual title. This is why some speculate that this was Jesus himself. You can read much about Melchizedek in Hebrews 6 and 7.

Hebrews 6:1 For this Melchizedek, **king of Salem, priest of the Most High God**, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," 3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

But Melchizedek was also King of Salem means “King of Peace” - Salem seems to have been a specific place, not a figurative picture...

Further, Melchizedek is also called a priest – a type of Jesus Christ. Melchizedek was most likely a Canaanite who faithfully served the true and living God. (Abram was not the only Christian of that time. Even Seth, Noah’s son, was still alive.) But other Scriptures confirm Melchizedek as a priest.

Psalm 110:4 The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

Hebrews 7 says that Melchizedek had no known father or mother. No one knew the time of his birth or the day of his death. (and so he was compared to Christ). One comparison:

Zechariah 6:13 Yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, And shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

3. Melchizedek brought out bread and wine as he came out to meet Abram. Bread was a picture of the foundation for human existence. Wine was a picture of celebration – a feast – a victory sign – noting that Abram had victory over his enemies (see verse 20). These 2 things picture God’s provision for all of man’s needs – his basic needs and enjoyment as well. Eating bread and drinking wine was a picture of the fellowship that Abram had with God and fellowship he had with Melchizedek.

4. While Melchizedek did not celebrate the Lord's Supper with Abram (but had a fellowship meal), it was a celebration of victory – and in that aspect it is similar to what we celebrate in the Lord Supper. We celebrate that God's victory today over the greatest enemy of all – sin – by eating a thanksgiving meal together. The early church used to call the Lord's Supper the Eucharist – meaning, a thanksgiving meal.

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 tithe 什一奉獻 of all.

5. As a priest of God, Melchizedek **prayed for Abram and blessed Abram.** This was a priestly function. Abram is a receiver of blessings. It wasn't Abram's natural goodness, for he had none of himself, but it was God's declaring him to be blessed. And then **Melchizedek blessed God.** How can anyone bless God? In blessing God you are declaring God's praise so that others would praise him. Of course you can add nothing to God's nature. He needs nothing and nothing can be added to him.

6. But you have to see now that **Melchizedek was also a prophet.** How? He blessed Abram because Abram would be the source of Jesus. This is why he said to Abram: "Your blessedness is because of God's blessedness."

7. Learn that you must praise God for who he is and what he has done for you. Learn that you must also give God thanks for what he has done for others, as Melchizedek did.

8. Question: How would you personally respond knowing that you have full rights to eternal blessings and will cause the world to be blessed? Arrogance? 自大 **This was Abram's test.** (Consider how some people respond when they become citizens...how they become boastful and powerful...) Well not Abram. He responded with tithing to God through the priest. He received so he gave. Shiny things did not blind his eye.

9. Two questions:

a. Do you give your tithe with full awareness of God's preservation, restoration, and protection... knowing you are eternally rescued from hell?

b. How would you respond knowing that you were "controlled" by another? In Abram's case he was thankful, for he knew that God loved him. Do you respond to God's control as somehow a limitation to your freedom, or do you trust that he cares for you and will give you everything you need?

Abram's Tests with the King of Sodom

21 Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself."

22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 "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' —

24 "except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion."

1. Abram's second test in a way was more challenging than the 1st: He was tempted to receive gifts from a wicked king for saving the wicked king's life and his nation's life. The king of Sodom offered a generous gift – all the things that Abram had rescued. It was an offer that would have greatly increased Abram's wealth. (At the very least he might have thought: This would compensate me for the 10% I just had to give.)

2. You see, the day after victory is often the day of greatest temptation! And it is true that the more you

seek to serve the Lord the more the Devil will tempt you with sin. The question was: Would Abram pass or fail this test? Would he be blinded now by shiny things...would he try to justify taking gold from Sodom?

3. Abram's response was decisive. He took an oath before Jehovah, covenant God, that he would take nothing from the king of Sodom. (Notice how he started using the language of Melchizedek – God Most High. And he raised his hand...a common method of taking an oath...a method that is still being used today.

Revelation 10:5 The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer,

The gift that the king of Sodom offered itself was not bad. It was the associations with Sodom from which Abram wanted to stay away. He would leave his clothes like his great grandson Joseph did to get away from Potiphar's wife.

4. Why did Abram swear? He wanted to show the degree of seriousness that he had in his statement. (Oath taking is required for serious occasions时刻.) Why did he want such seriousness? Abram wanted the world to know that he was not a mercenary唯利是图的– fighting for money, but he was simply doing what God told him to do. And if he were doing what God wanted him to do, God would provide everything he needed to do what he wanted them to do. God indeed was Possessor of heaven and earth. And God was Abram's friend.

Genesis 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

5. Abram refused to take even a sandal strap...not wanting anyone to say that he made Abram rich. No wonder God could entrust a man like this with wealth. Abram was not enamored被迷住with wealth...something Solomon warned against – saying that lusting for wealth was just vanity...a vanity that leads to death.

6. But at the same time, the 3 tribes that went with him – the people of Canaan – the non-Hebrews – were granted their share. His liberality was his choice, but he did not want to force his choice on the other men.

Conclusion:

Abram had Salem and Sodom before him. He chose Salem –peace. He chose peace because he was looking forward to the Prince of Peace coming to die for the sins of the world. And he patiently waited for that day. It was Abram's faith in the coming Savior that caused him to live as honorably as he did. He listened to God's voice, he obeyed God's commands, and so he rejected joining wickedness.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Let's consider some applications that you can learn from these tests:

1. When God gives you directions in his Word, it doesn't matter how difficult it is, do it.
2. When you are faced with the possibility of lusting for wealth, remember the eternal riches you have in Christ – Your Redeemer, Your Keeper, and Your Eternal Security. Remember the song: No matter what the test may be, God will take care of you.
3. Knowing this, you will learn to give to God what belongs to him in the form of your tithes and offerings.
4. Learn to appreciate the sensible signs, baptism and the Lord's Supper, that the Lord has given to you to remember his work for you.

Finally, do you know the Priest who makes intercessions求情for you and offered his own blood for the forgiveness of the world? Are you trusting in the King who rules over the world that not a hair can fall from your head without his approval? Are you listening to the voice of the Prophet who says that without entering through him – the Door – you have no hope of salvation, but you will die in your sins? I hope you are listening to him.