

God Most High

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. Good morning. So first of all, well done, Catherine, for being able to pronounce those names.

I still have it. I have to do them phonetically. I've got them in here phonetically on my script. So yeah, so we're looking at the part of the story of Abraham this morning in verses 17 to 24.

But just to give you and myself a bit of background and context, have a little bit of a preview as to what happens leading up to this passage. The context is that Abraham and Sarah had been to Egypt.

He'd lied about his wife being his sister. But Pharaoh has blessed them. God's blessed them through Pharaoh even still. And then Abraham and his nephew Lot separate because their herdsmen have been arguing.

I mean, Lot goes one way and chooses to go and live in what we know as the green fields next to the city of Sodom. I would say that might be a bit of a strange and not a very wise decision.

[1 : 04] And, sorry, Lot goes to live that way, that's right. And Abraham goes the other way. And God is now going to make some amazing promises to Abraham before he gets there.

So when this story occurs, it could be a Hollywood blockbuster. There's action, there's intrigue, there's heroism, and there's a rescue all in our story today.

And we're going to work through it together bit by bit. And we'll see that there's a battle. In fact, there's two battles going on. There's a big battle involved. And the battle is to see who is to be the king of kings, the God most high.

To see who deserves honour, the one who's going to rule and reign. So in the first few verses from 1 to 12, a little bit earlier on, apart from lots of unpronounceable names, what exactly is going on? The situation is that we have four kings who are ruling over five kings. But the four kings go off to war, and they're really successful in their battle.

[2 : 08] They win lots of battles, and they come back. The four kings come back. And then the five kings think, ooh, it might be a really good idea now to rebel here.

And they come out, and they fight the four kings. But the four kings win. And then these guys run off to the hills, or escape, and go and fall in some oil and tar pits.

It's a horrible death. And are defeated. And whilst this is all going on, Lot, who is living near Sodom, gets carried off as well. He gets taken away, captured, and he's trapped.

Like I said earlier on, it probably wasn't a good decision for him to be there in the first place, one of the most vilest cities like going at the time. And he was helpless. And I wonder what he's feeling. There's a battle around him. He's been chatting with his uncle Abraham about where to go and live. He's chosen to live in the Greenland. Maybe it wasn't a choice that he made out of faith. Maybe it was just the facts that he was looking at.

[3 : 09] Maybe he just made a decision to live there, just because of what he could see in front of him. It's not his battle. He's not really supporting the king of Sodom. He just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

So I wonder for us, do we sometimes feel that we're also surrounded by battles? Stuff that actually has nothing to do with us, but actually affects us?

And sometimes it can be really easy to get drawn into other people's battles. Sometimes also we can feel that we've been drawn off into the worldly things that are happening around us, the worldly powers, and we can get a bit overwhelmed by them.

You see, even though we are the people of faith, we're not immune to the effects of a broken world. We don't escape what happened hundreds of years ago.

That stuff, sin, still impacts our lives and our behaviours. And sometimes life can seem really unfair and out of control sometimes, and we think, what on earth is going on?

[4 : 09] Why do I deserve this? I just chose to live in the green land. I just chose to live the best way I can. And yet this is all happening around me. So a question to answer this morning is, who is king?

Who is that worldly power? It can feel like the worldly powers are all around us that are king. And when we look at the continuing impact that we see of the COVID pandemic, the cost of living crisis, maybe what's going on at school or in the workplace, we find it difficult to get on with people. These things are really hard, and it can feel like the world might be against us, and that it's winning. But will they have ultimate power in the end? Will they be king? We'll pick up at verse 13. It says, When Abraham heard that this relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men in the household and went in pursuit.

During the night, Abraham divided his men to attack them, and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobar, north of Damascus. He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.

[5 : 32] So what a rescue. Do the worldly powers reign? Well, no. The people of faith charge in. Abraham charges in with all his men, not worrying about whether he's going to get killed or not.

And he rescues Lot and his family and his possessions. It's wonderful. It's exciting. He breaks in. And often we think this is how we should be, shouldn't we?

We're the people of faith. We're the one with the promises of God, releasing those people oppressed. Romans 5 verse 17 says, For if by the trespass of one man death reigned through that one man, how much more will those receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ?

So this should be us, shouldn't it? We shouldn't be at the bottom of the mountain, maybe trapped in a ravine. We feel like we should be reigning in life on top of that mountain.

And that's where Abraham is. He's rescued Lot and he's on the top of the mountain. And we're those people of faith too. Should we be doing that as well? Should we be reigning in life rather than in the doldrums sometimes being kicked around by worldly things?

[6 : 42] Well, I think this is something to be really careful about because there's a danger that if we think like that, we can wander into something technically called an over-realized, I've to put my teeth in, eschatology.

In other words, we're pulling forward the eternal promises of God that are planned for us in the future, but we're trying to pull them in now rather than living it now and not yet.

Jesus has come. He will come again. And we're claiming things that are actually for the future and we're trying to make them happen now. Now, I don't know about you, but my Christian life often is those mountaintop and those valley experiences, often, you know, up and down like that.

And we're told that we're going to suffer. We're told that we'll have challenges. And we're told as a disciple we've got to pick up our cross and follow God. So we're going to have those difficulties and challenges. And when we are reigning in life, it's less about the situations and it's more about our attitude.

It's more about our spiritual place, our identity, our home in Christ, what's being achieved by him through us. That's the point. And I think that's what the point of this context is.

[7 : 54] In Luke 10, when Jesus sends out the 72, I love this passage, Jesus sends out his disciples and they go and do absolutely amazing things.

They see demons cast out, people healed. And Jesus says, I saw Satan fall from heaven. But then he says in verse 20, do not rejoice as the Spirit submits to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

So Jesus spells out to them what they should be excited about. And we flip it around and we can look at the worldly powers and what's going on. And we can say that we're at the bottom of that mountain stuck in the ravine, or we can say that we're at the top of the mountain with a king.

And Jesus points this to us when he says to Abraham, in fact, don't celebrate in that victory.

Celebrate that you're a man of faith, that we're a people of faith with the promises of God.

And he's going to rescue you and he's going to use you. And he's got you in his hand. You see, we can have those brilliant moments where we appear to be reigning in life in our situations.

[9 : 00] When we see people healed, we see our friends come to know Jesus. And the danger is that we get too excited about those things and we forget about what Jesus has accomplished for us in eternity.

So rejoice, but don't rejoice too much in that. Rejoice because your name is written in heaven. So Abraham successfully rescues Lot.

Abraham defeats the four kings. That defeated the five kings, which makes him the king of kings. So the question is, is Abraham king? And should we feel like we should be king over our lives too? Always reigning, always ruling over every situation. Verse 17 to 20.

After Abraham returned from defeating Kedolomah and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the valley of Sheba. That is the king's valley.

[10 : 04] Then Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. He was a priest of God most high and he blessed Abraham saying, blessed be Abraham by God most high, creator of heaven and earth, and praise be God most high, who delivered your enemies into your hand.

Then Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. So does Abraham think he's king? That Abraham thinks he's ruling and reigning over everybody and everything? No. We see that immediately. He met the two kings, the king of Sodom and the king of Salem, Melchizedek. And Melchizedek comes as a man of peace and gives him sustenance. And we've not got any idea really how Abraham recognised him.

But we know that he recognised him as a person to be honoured. In Hebrews 7, it talks a little bit about him there, about Melchizedek. It says, So Abraham gives him a tenth and he's blessed by him.

And those two facts alone show that Abraham knew that he was someone greater than him. So Abraham has just rescued Lot. He's rushed in. He's saved him. What a wonderful Marrakes delivery.

[11 : 23] But he knows he's not the king. And for us, Melchizedek, the king of Salem, the king of peace, wants to point us to Jesus, that greater king. When he says in verse 20, Blessed be God most high, who delivered your enemies into your hand.

Melchizedek, the king of peace, pointing towards Jesus for his. And Abraham says, Look, let there be no doubt that you've had a great victory.

You're the people of faith, the man of faith. You've got the promises, but let there be no doubt your success was because of God. He rescued Lot, and it was because God used you, because God the most high delivered your enemies into your hand.

Don't get above your station. You're not the king, Abraham. There's one who's bigger and better. And in Timothy it says, Jesus, king of king, lord of lords. And this bit of the story allows us to see that truly he is the king.

Jesus is the king of kings. Melchizedek and Abraham root Abraham's success in God, not his friends, not his alliances, not all his many trained men or his strategy.

[12 : 32] He makes that point. It's the king of kings. It's Jesus. We're not king. Abraham's not king. Melchizedek's not king. God, the most high, he is king.

But is he really king? Let's see what happens as we come to the end of the story. The king of Sodom said to Abraham, give me the people and keep the goods for yourself.

But Abraham said to the king of Sodom, with raised hand, I have sworn an oath to the Lord, God most high, creator of heaven and earth, that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or a strap of a sandal, so you will never be able to say, I have made Abraham rich.

So the king of Sodom comes out to Abraham and says, look, you can keep your loot, you can keep the spoils, I'd like to take my people back. Abraham refuses and he says, no, you have it.

All I want to take is the things that the men have eaten and what my friends deserve for what they've done. As for me, I don't want anything because I don't want to say, ever, that you made me rich.

[13 : 36] You see, we can look at this story and we think it's just about the battle, the rescue, the excitement, the action. That's what it's all about. But actually, it's more about what's going on in Abraham's heart.

As you know, for us, we can also look at life and think it's a bit like a battle, a bit like being stuck at the bottom of a valley trying to get out and that the battle maybe is just a physical battle, whether it's COVID or job loss, relationships, whatever we're surrounded by.

But there was another battle going on Abraham's heart and that's the battle for trusting God as a true king of life. You see, before he had to fight that physical battle, he had to fight a spiritual one. And so, when the king of Sodom comes and says, you could have the spoils, you can have the loot, he says, no, I don't trust in money, I don't trust in you, I just want to trust in God. He was trusting him as his king.

And I know for most of us as disciples of Jesus, we'd probably say the same, wouldn't we? Jesus is king, I want him to be king. But let's say, if your life was represented by a stick of rock, good old Western Supermare rock, and it said, Jesus is king at the front, and it said, Jesus is king at the back, would Jesus is king go right the way through?

[14:58] You might maybe say it with your mouth, you might maybe say it with your finances, but are you trusting God for your family, for your job, for your situation?

Is he king over everything? Are you giving all things to him? Your emotions, your ambitions, your future, and your past. Is he really king?

Abraham had a little test here, and it wasn't just about rescuing Lot, it was about who he was going to trust, who he was going to proclaim king of his life, where was he going to get his security, and what was he going to give his devotion to?

And as I finish, just to think about ourselves, the same challenge comes to us today. This is an exciting episode of Abraham's life, it's worthy of an action movie, but as we said before, the battle is in Abraham's heart.

Your life might be really exciting, it might be really boring, but the true battle is always in our heart. So just as I finish, let's just have a couple of minutes to reflect, and just to pray.

[16:13] So whether you're like that person at the bottom of the mountain, stuck in the ravine, and you can't get up, or whether you're at the top of the mountain at the moment, and you feel like you've got it sorted and nailed, let's humbly come and say no, Jesus is king.

And Lord, I ask that you just help us to help you, to ask, to want to, want you to be king of our lives. Just maybe speak about, just in your hearts, about something that's going on at the moment, just give it to Jesus.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. So Lord, we thank you for those good things in our lives that you've given us.

but we don't want to trust in wealth or relationships or put anything else in security other than you, Lord. And we know that you know the challenges that we're facing too.

And I ask that you just help us all to want to put you as king of our lives. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[17:44] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.