

Abraham 3

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Date: 12 December 2004

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[0 : 00] Turn with me to the book of Genesis, chapter 14, and we'll take up the reading again at verse 17.

Genesis 14, verse 17, and the king of Sodom went out to meet Abram after his return from the slaughter of Kedderleomer and of the kings that were with him at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale.

And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine, and he was the priest of the Most High God, and he blessed him and said, Bless be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, and bless be the Most High God which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand.

And he gave him tithes of all. And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons and take the goods to thyself. I want you to notice tonight the difference between those two kings, the king of Sodom and the king of Salem.

And Abram said to the king, verse 22, the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hand to the Lord, the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth, and so on.

[1 : 27] Now, I should say before we begin this evening that I'm going to just take a break after this evening, and we'll come back to the short series on Abram after the year end or the year beginning.

So next time I'm here, God willing, I'll take a different theme. Next time I'm here, it'll actually be the last Sunday in the year. So perhaps it may be more appropriate to take on a theme which is appropriate for that occasion.

This is the first time you have a declaration of war in the Bible.

And the war is very often called the war between the four kings and the five. What we have to remember, we tend to think of Canaan as being one country.

But when Abram entered into Canaan, Canaan was not one country with one king and one language and one people. Canaan was a whole bunch of different countries, if you like, and each country was contained in the several cities.

[2 : 35] And so there was the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem and the city of Jerusalem had its own king and they had their own language and I'm sure they had their own dress style, their own culture and their own identity.

Then you would have the king of Bethel. And then you would have the king of Jericho. And each city was its own country. It's like, it's like, it's almost impossible to believe this, but it's almost impossible to imagine.

It's like as if Scotland, as if you had the king of Edinburgh and the king of Glasgow and the king of Inverness and the king of Perth and the king of Dundee.

It's hard to imagine, but that's the way it was in the land of Canaan at that time. So don't think in terms of Canaan being one massive great country with its own king.

That's why the Old Testament, even at the time when Joshua led the people across the Jordan, they were still, they were still like that. That's why God describes Canaan as the land of the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Perizzites and the Amorites.

[3 : 35] Because they were all different types of people with different cultures and different identities and their own king. And every city has its own wall around it. Because you can imagine that a setup like that, you would feel very vulnerable to attack.

Because in those days, might was right. And whenever you get human beings, and as the spread, we read before about after Noah, the human race spread throughout the world.

And as they spread, some of them would settle in one location. They would build a city and they would have children and grandchildren. And someone would become king and there would be a

government and so on and so forth.

But as the spread of humanity carried on, you had the spread of pride and anger and vengeance and longing to take over.

And you had a power lust. And so you had, even at that time, you had kings who wanted to take over the world. They wanted to build their own empires.

[4 : 36] They wanted to become, if they were great, that wasn't enough. They wanted to become greater. And so you had kings like we have in this chapter. Kings of the east who dominated other kings.

And who had defeated them in battle. You see, those four kings, if you like, they all came from the east.

There was Amraphel. And there was Arioch. And Kedah-la-Omar. And Taidal. They were all from the east. And interestingly enough, this is the interesting thing.

That they all came virtually from where Abram originally came from. The land of Mesopotamia. The land of Babylon. The land east of the Tigris River.

In modern day Iraq. It's quite strange, isn't it? Quite strange how Iraq is still a center of activity even in the modern world. Well, that's where all these kings came from. They came from areas around there.

[5 : 35] And at a time, sometime before then, they had defeated the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and Adma and Zeboim and Bela. And they were the regions just round about the Salt Sea.

If you go home and you get a map of Palestine, you'll be able to see the south. That's where Sodom was, south of the Salt Sea. And they had defeated them. Now, what happened in those days was, when one king defeated another, then the king which was defeated and all his people, they would become subjects of the victor king.

And from then on, they would pay tribute to the victor king. It's what you call in technical terms, a suzerain and a vassal. If one king defeated another, he was the suzerain.

He was the stronger king. And he was able to say to the vassal, from now on, you are my servant. You're part of my kingdom. You'll do what I say.

You'll pay me exactly what I want. And this is what had happened to the kings of Sodom. They had all been taken over. Twelve years ago, they had been taken over by all of these four kings.

[6 : 52] Amraphel, Ariok, Kedil-Oman, and Tidal, their king come. And there were kings that lived 700 miles away. That gives you an idea of how ambitious these kings were.

Now, you see what's happening. Last week, we spoke about the decision that Lot had made to go and live in Sodom. Presumably because he saw, or not presumably, we know definitely the reason he made that decision.

Because he saw the pasture and how green and how fertile the land was. And he wanted a large land to make his fortune and to increase his land.

But, you know, as soon as he went, as soon as he set down his roots in Sodom, he became a slave. You see, anybody who lived in Sodom was automatically a slave to those four kings.

Because as soon as you entered into the gates of Sodom and Gomorrah, you became part of the empire of Babylon. The empire of the east. And you see, we saw last week that Lot, he had no idea what he was letting himself in for.

[8 : 03] He made his decision without, he left God out of the picture. And I'm sure he thought to himself, this is the best decision I'm ever going to, I'm going to be free. And I'm going to be successful. And I'm going to be happy.

And I'm going to, this is going to be a complete change. No longer am I going to be tied to my uncle Abraham. I don't know whether he liked Abraham. I don't know whether they got on together. But in any case, we know that their herdsmen fell out.

But this was his chance to break free from Abraham. He walks into Sodom and as soon as he walks in, he becomes a slave. Because he has to give up some of his goods, those precious things that were so precious to him, he had to give them up to those four kings who were the suzerain kings and who demanded from every single subject.

They demanded that tribute be paid. Now that's a lesson in itself, isn't it? Because we make decisions. Very often our decisions are made in the interest of our personal happiness and our personal freedom.

And God tells us that if you take a step that is away, that is a departure from the Lord, you don't become free, you become a slave. Jesus says whoever sins is a slave to sin.

[9 : 15] You cannot get away from this one central fact that you're going to have to serve someone. You're not a free person at all. You're going to have to serve. You either serve God today or you serve yourself.

I said that last week. And there was Lot. And by the time he found out, it was too late. He was already having to pay tribute to the kings of the east, Amraphel and Arioch and all the rest of them. In any case, the chapter tells us that, and of course this is the only way that you could ever defend yourself against a suzerain. Because those four kings had, there was a coalition of four kings from the east.

The only way you could defend yourself against this coalition was to form a coalition yourself. And that's exactly what the king of Sodom did. He got together with Bershah and Shinnab and Shemabel and the king of Bela.

Now these were all towns that were round about Sodom and Gomorrah. So they formed a coalition and they said, that's it. We're not going to pay any more tribute to the kings of the east. We're going to rebel against them.

[10 : 18] The time has come. We're going to stand up for ourselves. And of course you know what's going to happen, don't you? The four kings of the east, they decide that they're not going to accept us. And they come all the way, 700 miles, all the way to the south of Palestine.

And just in order to kill two or three birds with one stone, we read about their exploits. They don't just come against the kings we've been talking about, the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah.

They decide to make the journey worthwhile. And they, looking for the verse in the 14th year, that's right, in verse 5, came Kerala Oman and the kings were with them and smote the Rephaims and Ashteroth and the Zuzims and Ham.

You see, they go on this campaign of victory where they make their journey worth their well. And after they wreak havoc on all the towns in the south, they then turn. And on the way home, they're about to get their own back on those kings of Sodom and Gomorrah who have dared to stand up against them.

And you see, the problem was the geography of the area was against the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. You would have thought that they would have known the geography of the area, but they don't. Because they're unprepared.

[11 : 41] And as soon as they start to fight the kings of the east, they fall into tar pits. Apparently there were tar pits. I don't know what slime pits is in the AV is slime pit. The NIV has tar pits.

And I guess that there must be in that region, or there certainly were then, natural areas of tar where the ground was soft. And where it was impossible to ride a horse.

You needed a horse, of course, to engage in battle in those days. And it would have been impossible. You can just imagine the chaos trying to fight against four kings and all the thousands of men that were with them.

And you're fighting on ground that gives way underneath you. Well, you have no chance. And the kings of Sodom, they all sort of fell. And what happened there was the kings of the east took captive everyone who belonged, verse 11, to Sodom and Gomorrah and all their vittles and went their way. That's all their goods. That means all their goods. And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son. I just wonder, just as an aside, I just wonder if they had a particular interest in Lot. I wonder if they had a particular interest in Lot.

[12 : 45] Maybe they recognized there's something about him which maybe he spoke their language or something like that. Maybe they saw something in him that they identified with and they, well, this is one of ours.

This man comes from our area of the world. Because he did. He came from almost exactly the same area as they came from. And it's quite strange, isn't it? It's quite strange that when you take a step away from what the Lord wants you to do, you're drawn back.

Back to Egypt and back to the old ways once again. You see, there's always a power on us. There's always a pulling power trying to get us back to do the things that we did before we were converted. Or to do the things that we know are wrong. Or to live the life that we know is wrong. And so someone came and told Abram what had happened.

And Abram, and this gives us an idea of his strength and his power at that time. He had 318 men, servants who were born in his own home.

[13:46] That's not including the servants he had acquired in Egypt. So he must have had hundreds of servants at that time. Abram was himself a kind of king. Although he didn't have a city.

He didn't have a city with a wall around it. Although he lived in tents. There was a great spread of tents. There must have been a great spread of tents. He was quite a community in and of himself.

And when Abram heard that his brother Lot was taken captive, verse 14.

He armed his trained servants, born in his own house. 318 and pursued them to Dan. And what happens then is nothing short by the way of a miracle. Because there would have been thousands of soldiers.

Trained soldiers from the east. And I reckon they were all celebrating and drinking. And they thought nothing was going to happen to them. They thought the world was theirs.

They had captured. They had been on a conquest. And they had captured every city. They were invincible. You see, if you think you're a... The more successful you are, the more invincible you think you are.

[14:47] And that's what happened to these men. Until Abram and his trained men came up behind them in Damascus. And when the Lord, of course, helped them. And Abram and his men defeated them.

They routed them. Pursuing them to Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods. He also brought his brother Lot and his goods. And the women also.

And his people. So this was a mighty defeat. You would know... This is almost like a David and Goliath situation. Where the weak is able to overcome the strong. And that's very often what happens in the Bible.

Because the battle is the Lord's. That's what David said. The battle is the Lord. And this is Abraham realizing and discovering that the strength. That whilst men and women put their trust in horses.

That he puts his trust in the Lord his God. See, all the way through this is a lesson in what it means to live by faith. And Abram, every step he takes, God comes into everything.

[15:47] Because God is the one who has promised to bless him. And God has promised to lead him and guide him. Now, I want us to spend the rest of the time focusing on what happens as Abram and his men is coming back from this war.

And he's bringing Lot and Lot's family and all the goods that had been stolen by the kings of the east. I want us to happen. Because on his way home.

And home is now Canaan. On his way home he is met by two very different kings. Two very different kings.

And you know how different they are by what they say to him. There's one king called Melchizedek. You read that in verse 18. There's another king called Bera.

He's the king of Sodom. And two more opposite kings you could never hope to imagine. The king of Sodom is interested in goods and riches and possessions.

[16:53] And he's interested in making a treaty and making an agreement with Abram. He is interested in buying Abraham's friendship. And Melchizedek, the other king, is interested in the Lord.

Now, this king, Melchizedek, let's take him first. He's one of the most mysterious figures in the Bible. He appears out of nowhere.

We don't know anything about his background. And after this chapter we don't hear anything else about him until Psalm 110. The psalm that we've read about.

We don't know anything about him except those few verses that we read about in this chapter. He appears out of the blue. And he's been the subject of all kinds of speculation.

And there's all kinds of theories about who he might have been. And I'm going to tell you tonight, and I hope I'm not going to fall out with anybody over this, but I'm going to tell you I don't believe any of the theories at all.

[18:00] I'm sorry, but I don't. I'm not convinced by any of them. And I don't want to spend any time speculating about who this Melchizedek was. Because we're not told who he was.

We're told who he was like. And that's the important thing. And that's where God speaks to us in this passage. And that's what God wants us to know. God doesn't want us to know who his father was or who his earthly father or mother was.

He doesn't want to know what he looked like or what he wore or what language he spoke. All he wants us to know is who he was like. Because the Bible tells us that Melchizedek was like Jesus. It's absolutely clear on that. And this chapter contains the gospel. You think the gospel is only found in the New Testament. Here is the gospel in the Old Testament. Because here is the message of God coming to Abraham.

And God is showing him and revealing to him the only way of salvation that is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. So tonight, I don't believe that Melchizedek was Shem.

[19 : 09] You know, there are some people who believe that Melchizedek was Shem. Just in case you think that some of these people really didn't know what they were talking about. But Martin Luther believed that Melchizedek was Shem.

So some very respectable people believed that Melchizedek was Shem. Other people have tried to say that he was the Holy Spirit. I don't believe that for a moment.

That he was the Holy Spirit. Other people believe that Melchizedek was an angel or some kind of other divine being. I don't believe for a moment that Melchizedek was an angel or even a divine being.

Other people believe, and maybe I'm a bit controversial in saying this, other people believe that he was actually Jesus. I don't believe that for a moment.

Because Hebrews tells me, in chapter 7, we just read it, that he was like the Lord Jesus. Now it wouldn't have said that if he was Jesus.

[20 : 08] I believe the Bible would have said it and made it absolutely plain that this was Jesus. But it says that he was like Jesus. Ah, but you say, but you say, what about where Hebrews tells us that he had no father or mother?

But that doesn't mean that he literally didn't have a father and mother. It means that we don't know anything about his father and mother. It means that the way he appears in the pages of the Bible is that he appears out of nowhere as a person who represents, represents and symbolizes the Lord Jesus Christ.

The important thing tonight is not to spend time speculating about who Melchizedek was, but to know that Melchizedek tells me, and that God tells me in Melchizedek about the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, Abraham lived 2,000 years before Jesus, and yet Jesus said about Abraham that Abraham saw my day and rejoiced.

That means Abraham knew much more about the Lord Jesus than perhaps we might imagine. He knew much more because God revealed it to him in a particular way, in a special way.

[21 : 19] And Abraham trusted and believed and followed the same Jesus as I hope that you and I trust and believe in tonight.

And the way that God showed himself in the Old Testament was in a very specific way, in what we call types or models. Now, let me explain what a type is.

Most of you will know this already, but for the sake of those who you don't know, perhaps some of the younger ones, if you go into the Western Isles Hospital, you go through the door, and on your right-hand side, you'll see a model.

It's actually a very nice model. And it's a model of the hospital. And that model is actually older than the hospital itself.

That model was made long before the hospital was ever built. And the reason the model was made was so that everyone would be able to see what the hospital was going to look like.

[22 : 22] That's what happens when architects build a building. That's what happens with the Scottish Parliament, for example. Long before the Scottish Parliament building was opened, the first thing they did was they made a model.

So that everyone could see what the building was going to look like. And that's the same with Western Isles Hospital. If you look there, years perhaps before the hospital was ever made, there was a model.

So everyone knew what it was going to look like. Now, years before Jesus came into the world, God put models into the world. He put, that's what we call a type.

And some of those models were sacrifices. The sacrifices that were made by Moses and Aaron and the children of Israel. They were to show the children of Israel what Jesus would do in giving himself on the cross.

This was God's way of showing in pictorial form what he was going to do one day in sending Jesus to redeem us by giving his life on the cross. The Passover was a tremendous model, if you like, or a type of what Jesus would do one day.

[23 : 29] But there were some people in the Old Testament and they themselves were models that showed us. And when you looked at them and when you found out something about them, you knew and you got to know, you discovered Jesus Christ.

And this is Melchizedek. That's what he shows us. Because if you ask him what his name is, you'll find out that his name is Melchizedek. What does Melchizedek mean? It means king of righteousness.

And you know, of course, that a name meant a whole lot more in the Old Testament than it does in our day. A name, your name symbolized who you were. And so when Abraham got to meet this king, he was king of righteousness.

But it's also, when you ask where he is king and where he dwells, he is king of Salem. Salem. Now most people believe that Salem was the old name for Jerusalem.

But Salem is another name for peace. So we're building up a picture of him all the time. First thing we know about him is that he is the king of righteousness. Second thing we know about him is that he is the king of peace.

[24 : 39] Third thing we know about him is that he is also, as well as being a king, he's a priest. He's the priest of the Most High God. Now that's all I want to know. That's enough.

Because you know, the gospel is contained in all of those three words, these three titles. I don't need to know any more. But out of these three titles, there's only one of them that brings me any joy whatsoever.

And that's the last one. For me to discover that this man was the king of righteousness, it tells me who he was.

It tells me something about him. But it doesn't give me any hope. Because I know that when it comes to where I stand before God, I'm not righteous.

You see, if you and I tonight are going to really know the Lord personally, that's the one thing above everything else that you need.

[25 : 47] And it's the one thing that you don't have. And that's why you have no peace. You see, the second title is the king of peace.

That tells me something about Melchizedek, but it doesn't give me any joy whatsoever. Because I know that by nature I have no peace with God because I don't have righteousness with God. It's like I was saying this morning to the children.

That who may stand in the holy place of God. That's what Psalm 24 asks the question. Who may stand in the holy place of God? And the answer is, he who has clean hands and a pure heart.

Which one of us has clean hands and a pure heart? Which one of us is able to go and stand in God's holy place? Which one of us tonight would be able to go and meet with the Lord by ourselves?

Standing by ourselves? None of us. None of us by ourselves could possibly enter into the presence of God who is of pure our eyes. And to behold iniquity.

[26 : 51] That's what the Bible tells us. We cannot tolerate sin in any form. And we are sinners.

There is no non-righteous. No, not one. But the third title is the one that brings me hope and brings me joy.

Because the third title of Melchizedek is the one that brings me to God. Because as well as being king of righteousness. And as well as being king of peace.

He is also the priest of the most high God. You know what the priest did in the Old Testament? He was the man who stood between Israel and God. And he was the one who made sacrifice for Israel. By which their sins were forgiven. And they were reconciled to God. And this Melchizedek then tells us. He points us to Jesus.

Who doesn't have to continually make sacrifice. But by his one sacrifice on the cross. He reconciled sinners to God.

[27 : 53] And therefore created peace with God. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let me ask you once again tonight. Because this is where it touches every one of us.

Do you have peace with God? Because if you don't have righteousness. You won't have peace. There's only one way to peace with God. And that's by having his righteousness.

And when a person trusts. When a person comes to that point of surrendering. Their heart and their life to the Lord.

God promises us that not only our sins are forgiven. But that Jesus gives us his righteousness. So that a person who is in Christ tonight.

In relationship with Jesus Christ. Is a person who can say. I am righteous. Not my own righteousness.

[28 : 54] But Christ's righteousness. Has been paid into my account. And by my great high priest. Jesus. Who has given his life.

As a sacrifice. And laid down his life. On the cross for me. Not only are my sins forgiven. But I can stand before God. In Jesus.

In his perfect righteousness. So Melchizedek tells us all of that. And it brings us once again to God. Through the gospel. And through the Lord Jesus Christ. You see. This Melchizedek arose out of nowhere. I don't know what his history was. I can only assume that God preserved for himself.

Some kind of genealogy.

As well as Abraham. Which still continued to worship the true and the living God. But here is this world in turmoil. There's warring going on. And fighting going on.

[29 : 52] Between the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. And we know from the rest of Genesis. How much wickedness there was in the world. Even at that time. And there's death and destruction. And sadness.

And darkness. And confusion. And uncertainty. And out of all that. Comes this one figure. Who speaks a different language.

He's Melchizedek. The king of righteousness. And the same is true today. As it was then. In a world full of turmoil and darkness.

A full of death and destruction. Where there is no peace. And don't try and tell me that there's peace. There's no peace between kingdoms. Or empires.

And there's no peace. In our heart. Between us and God. Is there? Is there peace? Do you have peace with God? There's only one way. That you can have that peace.

[30 : 50] And that is by believing. And trusting. The Lord Jesus Christ. As your savior. And as your Lord.

And coming to know. The king of righteousness. The king of peace. And the priest. Of the most high God. That brings us.

Into relationship. With him. You see. That's the king that Abraham ran to. And pledged himself to. You see. There was two kings. On the way back. We mustn't think. We mustn't think. Only in terms of Melchizedek. There was two kings. There was Melchizedek. Who came. To Abraham. And he offered him bread and wine.

And by the way. I really wouldn't go down the road. Of seeing any kind of. Sacramental significance. In the bread and wine. Some people. Are. Fall into the trap.

[31 : 45] Of thinking. Well. Does this bread and wine. Not represent something. Of the bread and wine. In the New Testament. The communion. I don't think so. It's open to discussion. But I don't think so. I think it's just as well.

Which. To keep on safe territory. And just. Just believe that. Melchizedek came. Because Abraham needed. Nourishment. He needed to be fed. He needed to be nourished. But what's important. About Melchizedek. Is who he was. And who he represented. And what's important. About him. For Abraham. Was that he is the one.

Who Abraham pledged himself to. Because in giving himself. To Melchizedek. He gave himself. Once again. To the Lord. Now.

Lastly. There's another king. Waiting in the wings. As it were. And he speaks. A different language. Altogether. Verse 21. The king of Sodom. Said to Abraham. Give me the persons.

[32 : 39] And take the goods. To yourself. You see. Abraham rescued. He had rescued. All the people. He had sought to rescue. Lot and his family. There were hundreds of them. But he had also. Taken not only the goods.

Not only the possessions. Which Lot originally had. But he had taken. The bounty. Which all these kings. These eastern kings had. There must have been. There must have been. A massive amount of wealth.

And Abraham. As the victor. He had the rights. Over what he was going to do.

With that wealth. So the king of Sodom. Had absolutely no right. Whatsoever. To start making any demands. Of Abraham. But you see. He thought he would take his chance. Now just in case you think.

That this was. That what the king of Sodom. Said to Abraham. Was. Well it doesn't really make any difference. Does it? It was just a kind of innocuous. Harmless gesture. It wasn't. Because the king of Sodom.

[33 : 35] Was actually trying to buy. The friendship. Of Abraham. And if he had done. What the king of Sodom. And asked him to do. He would have. Gone. He would have entered into. A permanent relationship.

With. The king of Sodom. And that was unthinkable. For Abraham. Because. The king of Sodom. Represented. Everything. That God wasn't.

Everything. That was evil. Everything. That was law breaking. Everything. That was sinful. In other words. Abraham chose.

He chose. Melchizedek. Melchizedek. And in choosing Melchizedek. He turned his back. On this world. And that's what you have to do.

Jesus said. If anyone comes after me. He must deny himself. And take up his cross daily. And follow me. For whoever.

[34 : 38] Saves his life. Will lose it. And whoever loses his life. For my sake. Will save it. Tonight.

I hope. That your choice. By the power. Of God. Is Christ. Our.

Melchizedek. Let's pray together. Our gracious.

And eternal God. We ask. Once again. That the word. Will be made. Effectual. To us. That not only. May we be. Interested by it.

Or fascinated. By it. But that we might be. Grippled. To the very depths. Of our being. By the. The Lord. Of the word. The Lord. Whose word.

[35 : 35] It is. And the Lord. Who is. The word. Made flesh. So Lord. We pray. That tonight. As we worship. And as we listen. And as we grow.

In our understanding. Of that word. We pray. That we might grow. In our relationship. With the living. And true God. We pray. Oh Lord. That as we are challenged. By the gospel.

Once again. That we might. Make Christ. A resting place. And that we might. With. Acknowledgement of our sin.

Run to him. Who is the only way. Of our salvation. For we ask in his name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.