



TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

Talk Genesis 14:1-16: Abram's Rescue of Lot After the Defeat of Sodom

Lesson 30

In the first half of Genesis 14 we read of an international skirmish between four kings from the Mesopotamian Valley area and five kings from the Jordan Valley, including the king of Sodom. After the battle, Lot was taken into captivity, but Abram, in a great display of concern and courage, went after Lot and rescued him from the enemy.

"And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations, 2 that they 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 All these joined together in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). 4 Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

5 In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim, 6 and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as El Paran, which is by the wilderness. 7 Then they turned back and came to En Mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and attacked all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazezon Tamar.

8 And 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 joined together in battle in the Valley of Siddim 9 against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five. 10 Now the Valley of Siddim was full of asphalt pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; some fell there, and the remainder fled to the mountains. 11 Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. 12 They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

13 Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they were allies with Abram. 14 Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. 15 He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. 16 So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people."

Background Notes

Critics of the Bible used to say that the "international skirmish" or battle in Genesis 14 was not real history, but only a "Jewish legend." However, archeology has confirmed that there was a great invasion of the areas mentioned here at that time in history. The defeat was so great that many of the sites were never reoccupied.

The invasion occurred because the kings of the city-states in the Jordan Valley rebelled and refused to pay their annual tribute to King Chedorlaomer of Shinar, or Babylon, who was then in power over this whole area. Chedorlaomer and his allies traveled about 900 miles, and after attacking and defeating the surrounding area, they fought and defeated the armies of the five city-states, including Sodom. The battle took place in the Valley of Siddim near the Salt Sea (the Dead Sea). The cities of the five kings were plundered by the four kings of the East.

Some people escaped, including the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, but Lot was taken away as a captive. One of the refugees came and told Abram the story, so Abram and 318 of his own servants pursued the enemy. These servants were already trained for war (v14). This shows that Abram was not only wealthy, but also quite organized -- he even had organized security forces. Even though Abram may have had some allies with him and his 318 men (v13), he still was greatly outnumbered by the forces from the East. However, he and his men quickly traveled more than 100 miles and with some clever military strategy they took the enemy by surprise. They attacked by night, set the enemy to flight, and rescued Lot. Abram's forces chased the enemy all the way north of Damascus -- quite a distance. This was a tremendous victory for Abram.

Notice the change, by the way, in Abram's character. Do you remember in Egypt (chapter 12), for fear of his life, he lied about his wife and actually endangered her? What a change we see in Abram now! Even though he was outnumbered by the enemy, with great courage he went out and won the battle. Abram not only defeated the army of the four kings, but he rescued the captives and took back all the captured booty (v16).

Doctrinal Points

1. Carnal believers will suffer the consequences of their choices.

In Scripture, Lot is a picture of the carnal or worldly believer. We know he was a believer because we are told so in 2 Peter 2. But he was a carnal believer, a worldly believer. In Genesis 13, Lot made the selfish choice to move down to the well-watered plains of the Jordan Valley. By Genesis 13:12, Lot had already moved his tent **close** to Sodom. Here in chapter 14:12, we see that Lot had actually moved **into** Sodom -- and Lot didn't move into Sodom as a missionary! So when Sodom was attacked and defeated, Lot suffered the sad consequences of his bad choices. Lot was taken captive, and he faced death or slavery for life. Death for a captive, in ancient times, was not by lethal injection, but often by torture.

How do you think Lot felt at this point? Do you think he regretted his choices? If he did, it was only for a short time. How do we know that? Because Lot moved back into Sodom! Can you believe it? Lot moved back into Sodom, with all of its sin, only to lose everything again later when God completely destroyed Sodom.

What a lesson for us! God gave Lot a golden opportunity to get out of Sodom, but he didn't take it. How could Lot be so stupid? One of the consequences of worldly choices is that, little by little, you become desensitized to sin, then brainwashed into the world's way of thinking. So it was only natural for Lot to move back into Sodom -- back home again! Is it possible that there is someone here today that has been brainwashed by this world's system of values and attitudes? God may have given you chances to change your ways and get your act together, but thus far you haven't heeded the warnings. Remember, the Bible teaches that carnal believers will suffer the consequences of their choices!

2. Spiritual believers are responsible to restore fellow believers.

Listen to the words of Galatians 6:1: "*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*"

What's the Bible teaching here in Galatians 6:1? It's our doctrinal point: spiritual believers are responsible to restore their fellow believers. This biblical truth is illustrated in the actions of Abram who went out, at considerable trouble to himself, and rescued Lot. When Abraham heard that Lot was taken away as a captive he didn't say, "If you flirt with the world, you're going to get burned!" He didn't say, "Well, it serves Lot right!" And he didn't say, "You know, I would like to do something about this, but my hands are tied. How can I fight against four kings from the Mesopotamian Valley?"

Look at what we read in verse 14: "*Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive...he went in pursuit.*" Notice -- not his nephew, but his "brother." Abram considered Lot as his brother and felt a responsibility to rescue him, in spite of the fact that Lot was reaping what he had sown. What a great illustration of Galatians 6:1!

Now notice what is added at the end of that Galatians 6:1: "*Considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*" We are all vulnerable to failure, so we've got to be extremely careful in this restoration business. Many Christians have fallen themselves when trying to rescue fellow believers who have fallen into sin. I know a Christian couple whose marriage broke up as a result of their ministry to save other troubled marriages. We must be extremely careful -- but still we have the delicate responsibility of restoring fallen believers.

Do you know any fallen fellow believers? What are you doing about it? If you don't feel you can speak to them, maybe you could at least write a letter. You may say, "But they wouldn't listen to me!" Well, did Lot listen? Oh yes, Lot was sure glad to see Uncle Abram come along to rescue him -- but he moved right back into Sodom! So you might say that Abram was not "successful" -- but success is not the point here. The point is that the Bible teaches that we should do whatever we can to help, to rescue, and to restore fallen fellow believers. Spiritual believers are responsible to restore their fellow believers.

Practical Application: Let's not write off a fellow believer, saying "It serves you right."

Have you ever thought or said that? It's easy to do, especially if you have warned that believer. A couple of years ago, one of my former students called and asked my counsel about a job he was about to take. It would involve quite a bit of travel. I counseled him not to take the job because I knew it would take him away from the fellowship of his church, and I knew he had certain problems in the past. He didn't listen to my counsel and took the job. Sure enough, the job was not conducive to his Christian growth -- in fact, he fell as a believer. Just a few months ago he called me again. When he indicated that things were not going well, it was all I could do not to say, "It serves you right" -- but I didn't! Instead, I tried to encourage him in the restoration process, and tried to do what would be helpful to get him back on track in the Christian life. We have the responsibility to try to restore fellow believers. Let's not write off a fellow believer by saying, "It serves you right."