The Battle is El Elyon's

(The "Most High God" of Abram)
Genesis 14:1-24
5/31/1998

Introduction: vv.1-16

The Drama of Genesis 14 unfolds in 3 episodes:

vv.1-12- The Capture
(Lot & the cities he dwelt in are captured by powerful eastern kings)

vv.13-16 - The Conquest
(Abram delivers Lot in a strategic night attack)

vv.17-24 - The Coronation
(Abram is met with honor; but the glory goes to God)

"The Most High God" = El Elyon (vv.18,19,20,22)

**** Observe 3 practical lessons about El Elyon as seen in Abram's victory over the Amorite Coalition:***

I. Our BLESSINGS come from El Elyon;

He is in sovereign control over everything (v.17-19)

II. Our VICTORIES come from El Elyon;

We should show Him appreciation for them (v.20)

III. Our RICHES come from El Elyon;

We don't ultimately need the world's help (v.21-24)

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Songs:
--"The Battle is the Lord's"
--The Doxology

Last week--- with the discovery that Pakistan has nuclear weaponry and, like India, they are testing that nuclear technology--- the potential for great disaster between those two countries became evident. War is a frightening reality of depraved life on earth. It is always ugly, always terrifying.

In Genesis 14, the reality of war comes home to Lot and the cities he dwelt in.

"The kings of Jordan served Chedorlaomer for twelve years [meaning they sent him tribute – produce and money], but they rebelled in the thirteenth year [meaning they did not send anything that year], and in the fourteenth year he came to subjugate them. It was not uncommon for such campaigns to be held annually for the purpose of controlling vassal city-states." (Ross, p. 298)

"From our modern viewpoint, the invasion was a minor skirmish; but in that day, it was considered a major international conflict." *Wiersbe, p. 32)

v. 13
"These were confederate with Abram" – Because of the virtue in Abraham's life, even his Gentile neighbors gave him allied support. "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."

v. 14
Abraham did not go to battle to deliver Sodom (for they were wicked – 13:13), but to deliver his nephew Lot.

Gen. 14 gives us the Bible's first example of what might be termed a "Holy War."

Abraham's 318, plus the few who perhaps accompanied Aner, Eshcol, Mamre, were humanly speaking no match for the mightier coalition of the eastern kings.

v. 15
Damascus is a <u>long way</u> (over 100 miles) from Hebron (where Abram lived or the area of the Dead Sea (where Lot lived)! Distance wouldn't stop Abraham from delivering his nephew.

This conquest by Abraham is a strong testimonial to God's faithful promise to make Abraham great and to bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him (Gen. 12:3).

v. 18-22
Clearly the emphasis is not on Abraham but rather on **"the most High God"** (a title for God repeated four times in this context – v. 18, 19, 20, 22).

In a day of pantheism, God made it clear that he was the One above everything that is called god. This name points to the majesty of God. He is above all!

In Is. 14:13-14, Satan wanted to be like the "most High."

Since that time everyone wants to steal the prerogatives that belong only to God.

Men think they are God (EX: Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Herod; EX: Mormons, New Age Movement)

Because God is "El Elyon," we are on the winning side!

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v. 17

"The valley of Saveh" – could be the Kidron Valley (east of Jerusalem).

This valley, known also as the Kings' Dale or the Kings' Valley (cp. II Sam. 18:18), is also known as the Valley of Decision or the Valley of Jehosophat, located just down the hill from Jerusalem.

The honor that reaches Abraham by the King of Sodom is quickly overshadowed by the honor that comes to Abraham via the king of Salem.

Whose honor do you want? The king of Sodom's? Or the King of Salem's?

Abraham is about to be lauded as the hero by the king of Sodom, until Melchizedek appears on the scene and revealed El Elyon as the real Hero.

v. 18

"Melchizedek" – *Melchi (Meleck)* = "King"; *Zedek* = "righteousness"

His name means "King of righteousness" or "righteous king." Ultimately the only righteous king (of which Melchizedek serves as a type) is Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:11-16).

"King of Salem" = "king of peace". He was the king of Jeru<u>salem</u>, which means "city of <u>peace</u>" cp. Ps. 76:2).

"Evidently a group of people who knew the true Creator-God lived in Jerusalem under the king-priest Melchizedek. The Tell Mardikh tablets (c. 2300 B.C.) contain the name Jerusalem and hundreds of other place and personal names like Hazor, Megiddo, Gaza, Abram, Israel." (Ryrie note, Gen. 14:18).

"Priest of the Most High God" – According to Psalm 110:4 and Hebrews 7, Melchizedek had a priestly "order" that was totally unique from the Levitical order of priests (which would be established by Moses over a millennium later).

INSERT: Notes from Heb. 7

"Melchizedek . . . brought forth bread and wine" – God takes care of His hungry and thirsty troops through this man of God. The "bread and wine" would be the basic staples needed by Abraham and his men.

It is interesting that our High Priest, Jesus Christ, also gave these two items to his disciples, telling them that they were to be reminders of His body and blood, which were sanctified that we might live forever.

"The Most High God" – *El Elyon* - God, the God over all. Demonstrating God's sovereignty. There is no power above God; He rules with sovereign control over everything and everyone.

v. 19
As New Testament believers, our spiritual blessings come from God (Eph. 1:3), who has given us the victory in Christ, who has released us from captivity and has given us gifts (Eph. 4:7-8).

The doxology says: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

II. Our VICTORIES come from El Elyon;
We should show Him appreciation for them (v.20)

SEE: v. 14 – 318 armed men are not much to fight with! Abraham is going up against four more powerful kings and their armies!

God delights in taking a Sarah who could not bear children and making her the mother of one of the largest races on earth (Gen. 18:14, 32:12)

God delights in taking a humble slave like Joseph and elevating him second to Pharaoh over Egypt (Gen. 41:38-44).

God delights in enlisting 300 soldiers of Gideon to fight and conquer 120,000 Mideanites (Jud. 7:2, 7, 12; 8:10) (NOTE: 400 to 1 odds).

God delights in utilizing a Samson to destroy 1,000 wicked Philistines with a jawbone of a donkey (Jud. 15:16).

God delights in using a red-headed, freckle-faced, baby-faced (I Sam. 17:42) shepherd boy named David to wipe out a 9'9" fully armored Philistine named Goliath (I Sam. 17).

God delights in providing adequate food for a poor widow of Zarephath who only had a few drops of oil and a handful of grain (I Ki. 17:9ff).

God delights in using three Hebrew youths to show up King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Dan. 3).

God delights in using as His mouthpiece a John the Baptist, "who had no formal education, no training in a trade or profession, no money, no military rank, no political position, no social pedigree, no impressive appearance (or diet!)" (MacArthur, p. 51). Yet Jesus said, *"Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist"* (Mt. 11:11).

God delights in taking a boy's lunch consisting of two sardines and five bite-size biscuits to feed 5,000 men besides women and children (Mt. 14:17-19).

"Little is much when God is in it." -- Conversely, much is little, if God is not in it!

God delights in taking unlearned, ignorant, dumb fishermen from Galilee and turning them into the most bold and influential mortals ever to spread the Gospel message (Acts 4:13).

God places much emphasis on the size of the armed forces who captured Lot and plundered Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 1-12) so as to demonstrate the supernatural deliverance that was necessary to recover them.

The implied glory goes not to Abraham for the conquest but to the God who blessed Abraham with victory.

“Little is much when God is in it.”

Abraham gave Melchizedek 10% of the spoils taken in battle (Heb. 7:4). This offering was out of gratitude to God for the victory He gave.

El Elyon blessed Abraham with material goods, so Abraham turned around and gave 10% of it back to God (via God’s minister Melchizedek).

III. Our <u>RICHES</u> come from El Elyon;

We don't ultimately need the world's help (v.21-24)

v. 21

It is interesting that this ruler of Sodom, King Bera, has a name which means "gift" suggesting that the world bargains for your allegiance (Wiersbe, p. 37).

v. 22

Apparently, Abraham's decision to not receive honor from the world was made after his meeting with Melchizedek.

"Abraham was far more prepared to resist the offer from Sodom after receiving the blessing of Melchizedek" (Ross, p. 295).

v. 23

Elisha, like Abraham, refused to take financial remuneration from Naaman for a healing which God had given Naaman.

II Kings 5:15-16 - And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant. But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused.

Greedy Gehazi, however, wanted the reward, but was rebuked by Elisha – II Kings 5:26 - And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?

Many of God's people go tot he <u>world</u> for <u>answers</u> (rather than to God).

This is not to say that we should not benefit from the world of technology or medicine. But we must never become so dependent on man's answers that we overlook God's.

Examples of going to the world for aid:

1. Old Testament <u>Israel to Egypt</u> (for resources and aid)
2. Ahab's alliances with pagan kings
3. The king who sought not God but the physicians
4. The <u>Church of Corinth</u> going to the pagan law courts to settle personal disputes.

Why didn't Abraham take the reward from the pagan king? Implied:

1. He wanted the king to know that God ultimately won the battle, not Abraham
2. He wanted the king to know that he depended on God and not man's resources.
3. He didn't want to become obligated to the king (if a Christian organization receives finances from Caesar then Caesar has a right to control that organization).
4. Specifically, he didn't want the king to assume that Abraham's material blessings came via man (the world) but from God.

God's man and God's work are not funded by the world.

The principles implied in this verse are the same as those which motivated the Anabaptists to reject the state's control of the church.

The separation of Church and state has been a key Baptist distinctive for centuries.

By Abraham's giving to God (via the king of Salem) and not receiving from the world (via the king of Sodom), he shows his dependency and dedication to the king of Salem and not the king of Sodom.

We must be careful to never put ourselves in a position in which we are indebted to the world.

The passage raises some serious questions:

1. Should Christian choirs receive recognition and rewards from the world (as did Brooklyn Tabernacle)?
2. Should Christian schools and colleges receive funding/grants/ and financial aid from the world?
3. What about "charity discounts" from manufacturers of products known for worldliness or wickedness?
4. What about receiving honors or recognition by elements of society known for corruption or iniquity?

   (What about tax exemption?)

"too many servants of God have weakened their testimony by accepting applause and gifts from the people of the world. You cannot be a servant of God and a celebrity in the world at the same time." (Wiersbe, p. 39).

v. 24

"Abraham took only food for his men and gave his allies liberty to accept the spoils due them" (Ryrie's note).

It is important to note that "Abraham did not impose his convictions on his allies – Aner, Eschol, and Mamre. If they wanted to take part of the spoils, that was their business; . . . they were governed by a different set of standards." Others may, you cannot. (Wiersbe, p. 39).