In our last message in the study of the book of Genesis on “Abraham and Lot” we noted that the first eleven verses of chapter fourteen are an account of a power struggle between two opposing coalitions of kingdoms. On one side are four Mesopotamian kings of the East (14:2). On the other side is a second alliance which was a rebellion made up of five southern kings including the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah (14:2). The end result was the rebellion failed and Sodom and Gomorrah were sacked. Everything and everyone that could be carried off was. Unfortunately Lot and his family were among those who were taken captive.

Verse thirteen begins with someone bringing Abraham the news that his nephew Lot and his family had been taken captive.

Abraham saw it as his responsibility to help Lot and so when the news reached him of Lot’s capture, Abraham went after Lot. Abraham hastily assembled his forces and his allies and with a total of 318 men, he pursued the captors of Lot (14:14). Abraham staged a surprise nighttime attack and everything was recovered; the people and the possessions. Abraham with a much smaller force, turned all the previous victories of the invading armies to dust, and those who survived returned to their lands with little to show for all their fighting.

Abram headed back from his great victory and was met by two kings, the king of Sodom and the king of Salem. Apparently the king of Sodom came up to him first, but before he could speak, the king of Salem arrived (14:17-20). Only after Abram had dealt with the king of Salem did he deal with the king of Sodom. There are two battles in this chapter: Abram’s battle with the foreign kings, and his battle with the tempting offer of the king of Sodom.

This is the first victory in Abrams’s new relationship with God. Sadly it is also a record of Lot’s second chance, he did not have to return to Sodom but he did!

Conflict reveals character but so does success. I personally believe that success has tripped up more people than trials ever have. When we are down it is not hard to cry for help, but when we are on top, it seems to be hard to remember how we got there. God was watching to see if Abram would take the Glory that belonged to God alone, or would guard
God’s glory and not claim it for himself. **How many times have we claimed credit that really belonged to God?**

The test came in the form of the two kings who came to greet Abram on his victorious return. First, Melchizedek, king of Salem, came and gave Abram a blessing from God Most High and reminded him that it was God who had “delivered your enemies into your hand....” (Gen 14:18). How gracious of God to send a messenger to assure Abram and to remind him that God Himself had brought this unusual victory. Indeed this is only a part of the blessing that God had promised to Abram.

Success is a grave danger to the heart of every child of God! Success is a severe moment of testing before God. Be careful how you handle it. It is significant that we note that many a popular servant’s of God has fallen and lost their ministry because of exhibiting pride and taking the credit for what God had done.

“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. (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 of all. (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."

The New Testament commentary of Genesis 14:17-24 is found in Hebrews 7:1-4, “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 right-eousness," 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. (4) Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.”

**First, Abram Meets The King of Salem - Melchizedek** (14:18-20)
“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. (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 of all.”

The account of Melchizedek is exceedingly brief. He is mentioned only three times in the biblical record; here in Genesis 14:18-20, in Psalm 110:4, and in Hebrews 7.

**The Identity of Melchizedek**

Melchizedek is one of the most intriguing and mysterious men in the Bible. He seems to come out of nowhere. We have no idea of where Melchizedek came from, how he came to be in Canaan, how he came to be a worshipper and priest of the true God. We only know he was there. We don’t really even know his name. Melchizedek is probably a title since it means “king of righteousness.” He is the “king of Salem,” and Salem is the original Jerusalem, and Melchizedek is “the priest of God Most High” - Hebrew - El Elyon means ”Highest God." He is a worshipper and priest of the true God, ruling over Jerusalem even in those ancient times.

The theories of Melchizedek’s identity are many and varied. Because Hebrews 7:3 describes Melchizedek as “without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God...” some have thought Melchizedek is actually a Christophany – Christ appearing as man before his birth in human form in Bethlehem. But the fact that Melchizedek was the king and priest of an earthly city makes this unlikely. The early church father Origen thought that Melchizedek was an angel.

The ancient Jewish interpretation, which was also held by Martin Luther was that he was Shem, one of the sons of Noah. According to the figures in Genesis 11 Shem would live thirty five years beyond the death of Moses. But because the author of Hebrews states that his ancestors were “unknown” this would seem to preclude the possibility of him being Shem.

Some even have fancifully speculated Melchizedek is an outer-space visitor, an "unfallen Adam" from another planet, sent to observe the progress of God’s work of redemption for this fallen race.

As Morris states, "The question cannot be said to be settled completely . . . otherwise, the identity of Melchizedek would have been agreed on by Bible scholars long ago." (Morris) It probably is best to assume that whatever his origins may have been he was remarkably righteous man in a corrupt and decadent time but still simply a man. But we can, at the very least, say he was a extraordinary type or picture of Jesus.

**Priesthood of Melchizedek**

Being a priest in Israel was totally dependent on genealogy. Every priest must be able to prove that he was of the tribe of Levi. According to Scripture Jesus’ human lineage was
through the tribe of Judah not Levi. And so Jesus had to be of a different order of priest than the Levi.

Though Melchizedek seems like an obscure figure, he figures to be a very important Old Testament person. We know that even though Abram was one of the greatest men of faith in the Bible, Melchizedek was even greater. This is proved by the fact that he blessed Abram ("the lesser is blessed by the greater," Heb. 7:7) and he received tithes from Abram (Heb. 7:1-10). Abram humbly accepted Melchizedek's blessing and offered him a tenth of the spoils. We do know, from Psalm 110 and from the Book of Hebrews (the only other places in the Bible Melchizedek is mentioned) that he was a type of Jesus Christ, who became a priest forever “according to the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4). Hebrews chapters 5 through 7 makes a great deal of this idea.

So we are forced to ask, “What is it about Melchizedek as a priest that points to the superiority of Jesus' priesthood?” Why is important that Jesus’ be a priest in the Melchizedek order, rather than in the order of Aaron? First, we must note that Melchizedek was both a priest and a king! He is the “king of Salem,” and “the priest of God Most High.” History shows how dangerous it is to combine religious and civic authority. God forbade the kings of Israel to be priests and the priests to be kings. In fact in 2 Chronicles 26:16-26, King Uzziah tried to do the work of priest, and God struck him with leprosy. Melchizedek was an exception. When the Jesus the Messiah returns He will also be both a king and a priest.

The second reason why Jesus is said to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek is that his priesthood is to be eternal. The sacrifices offered by the priests (all descendants of Aaron) under the Old Testament sacrificial system had to be continually repeated. But the sacrifices of Christ were once for all time (Hebrews 10:12). No only did the sacrifice have to be repeated but the Levitical priest all died and had to be replaced. And since Jesus was to be our high priest forever He had to be a different kind of priest than seen in the Old Testament priesthood.

Melchizedek, as priest, does two things: he blesses Abram, and he blesses God. Melchizedek shows a priest must connect with both God and man and has a ministry to both God and man.

Secondly, Abram Meets The King of Sodom.
(14:21-24)
"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:... let them take their portion.”

As seemed proper, the king of Sodom wanted to reward Abram for all he did in recovering what was taken from the confederation of five kings, and he offered Abram a tremendous amount of loot. The king of Sodom, offered Abram all of the wealth captured as his reward. (14:21)

Yet, Abram will not take it - because of a vow he has made to “God Most High” - a phrase he uses after hearing Melchizedek use this particular title for God (Genesis 14:19).

Abram refused the spoil because he would let no man say a man had made Abram rich (Gen 14:23). It is significant that Abram knew how men would boast, and he did not give the king of Sodom the opportunity to take any credit for God working through his life. Abram demanded all the credit goes to God and God alone.

**Third, Abraham Meets the King of Heaven** (15:1-6)

“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.”

(2) But Abram said, “Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” (3) Then Abram said, “Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!” (4) And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.” (5) Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” (6) And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

The result was that God immediately revealed more of Himself in two significant aspects. First, he says to Abram, “Do not be afraid, ... I am your shield.” (Gen 15:1) David who knew what the protective power of God means wrote, “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; (3) The God of my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, My stronghold and my refuge; My Savior, You save me from violence.”(2 Samuel 22:2-3)

Secondly, he said to Abram, “Do not be afraid... I am your exceeding great reward” (Gen 15:1) Perhaps Abram as he sat in darkness began to rethink his refusal of any rewards for defeating the kings and restoring the people. God in effect said to him, “Forget about those things and be concerned with me!” To have God as our reward is to share in all that God has and all that God is. When we have the LORD we have enough.
Abram’s response was, “...Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, ...” (Genesis 15:2) Abram’s response is seen by some as a lack of faith. But after all Abram is 85 years old and he has already been waiting for 10 years for the fulfillment of the promise of an heir. Yet, Abram is correct in voicing his problem to God. As we all know there are different ways in which we can ask God questions and not all ways are right. You may experience some great disappointment in life and come in rebellion and shake your fist in God’s face and say, “Why did you allow this to happen to me?” Or you can come as a child and say, “Father, I have a problem. Would you help to understand it better?” If you don’t think it makes a difference try that with your spouse and see which method works.

Abram did the right thing, he laid the matter before God. He believes God will bring it to pass, he just doesn’t see how. In fact Abram is not expressing unbelief, but belief. When Abram says “Lord God,” (15:2) he is literally saying, “Adonai Jehovah, what will you provide.” This is the first time that we are given Adonai as a name for God. It literally means that Abram is recognizing God lordship over him.

He just wanted God to assure him of his Covenant promise. The Bible then says, “that the word of the LORD came to him; This man will not be your heir....” God then repeats his promise. Have you ever had to be told something more than once? God not only repeated the promise but He clarifies His promise. God then expanded the promise. God then asked Abram to look into the night sky and count the stars and assured him, “so shall your descendants be” (15:5)

The ultimate question in life is whether you believe God. Notice I did not say that the ultimate question was whether you believe in God. Many people claim to believe in God. There has to be a God, in their opinion. But this fact does not mean anything in the lives they live. The real question is whether you believe God, who makes these promises and whether you live by what God has promised.

What is recorded next is of momentous import-ance. “And he believed in the LORD and He accounted it for righteousness” (15:6). Notice it does not merely say that Abram believed the promise but that he believed the LORD. These words are so important that they are quoted three times in the New Testament (Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6, James 2:23 ). Thus by believing God Abram put himself in God’s hands determined to rest on Him and His promise. This is the kind of faith that the New Testament recognizes as pleasing God, referred to as saving faith. In other words, Abram was saved by grace through faith, not by good works. There is no other way of salvation anywhere in the Bible.

Conclusion

It was through the conflicts and battles that Abram came to a deeper understanding of who God is and what God wants in the lives of those who follow Him. The most important
characteristic of all is faith. Not just a belief in God. The real question is whether you believe God, who makes these promises and whether you live by what God has promised. Do you believe God, and does it make a difference in the way you live your life?
Melchizedek is mentioned only three times in the biblical record; here in Genesis 14:18-20, in Psalm 110:4, and in Hebrews 7.

**First, Abram Meets The King of __________ - Melchizedek.**

(14:18-20)
- The __________ Of Melchizedek

He is the “______ of Salem,” Salem is the original Jerusalem, and He is the __________ of God Most High.

The theories of Melchizedek’s identity are many and varied.
- Melchizedek was actually ________ appearing as man before his birth in human form in Bethlehem. (Heb.7:3)
- Melchizedek was an __________.
- The ancient Jewish interpretation was that he was __________, one of the sons of Noah.
  - It probably is best to assume that whatever his origins may have been he was remarkably righteous man in a corrupt and decadent time but still simply a ________.
- The __________ Of Melchizedek

**Secondly, Abraham Meets The King of __________ (14:21-24)**

Abram refused the spoil because he would not give the king of Sodom the opportunity to take any credit for what _____ did in his life.

**Third, Abraham Meets The King of __________ (15:1-6)**

God immediately revealed to two significant aspects of Himself.
- I am your __________.
- I am your exceeding great __________.