

Abraham Rescues Lot After the Defeat of Sodom

Genesis 14:1-16

Genesis 14:1-16 - *“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” in Genesis 14 was not real history – that it was only a “Jewish legend.” However, archaeology has confirmed that there was a great invasion of the areas mentioned here at that time in history. In fact, the defeat and destruction were so great that many of the sites were never re-occupied. 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. When one of the refugees came and told Abram the story, 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 very organized. He even had well-trained security forces.

Even though Abram may have had some local 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 to the north, 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 when he went to Egypt (chapter 12), for fear of his life he lied about his wife - and actually endangered her? What a change in Abram now! Even though the enemy outnumbered him, he went with great courage 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 2 Peter 2:7-8 says so. But Lot 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 River valley. By Genesis 13:12, Lot had already moved his tents **close** to Sodom. In chapter 14, Lot had actually moved **into** Sodom - but he didn't move into Sodom as a missionary! When Sodom was defeated, Lot suffered the sad consequences of his bad choices. He was taken captive, and he faced slavery or death. In ancient times, death for a captive wasn't by lethal injection, but often by gruesome torture.

How do you think Lot felt after he was rescued? Do you think he regretted his choices? If he did, it was only for a short time, because Lot moved back into Sodom! Can you believe it? Lot moved back into Sodom, with all of its sin - and he lost everything again when God completely destroyed that corrupt and evil city.

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 have been 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 home again - into Sodom!

Is it possible that you, like Lot, have been brainwashed by this world's system of values and attitudes? Has God 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.

Galatians 6:1 says: *"Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you may also be tempted."* What is the Bible teaching in Galatians 6:1? It's teaching our doctrinal point. Spiritual believers are responsible to restore their fellow believers.

This biblical truth is illustrated in the actions of Abram, who went and rescued Lot at considerable trouble and risk to himself! When Abram 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 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 Galatians 6:1: *"Considering yourself lest you also be tempted."* We are all vulnerable to failure, so we've got to be extremely careful when we're involved in the process of restoration. Many Christians have fallen themselves, while trying to rescue fellow believers who have fallen into sin. I know a Christian couple whose marriage broke up as a result of their efforts to help save troubled marriages. We're responsible to do the delicate work of restoring fallen believers - but we must be extremely careful not to fall ourselves.

Do you know any fellow-believers whom Satan has led away as captives? What are you doing about it? If you don't feel you can speak to them, maybe you could at least write a letter or an email. You may say, "But they won't listen to me!" Did Lot listen? Lot was very glad to see Uncle Abram come along to rescue him - but he didn't listen.

Lot moved right back into Sodom, so you might say that Abram restoration attempt 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 – regardless of the outcome. Spiritual believers are responsible to restore their fellow believers.

Practical Application

Let's not write off fellow believers, saying "It serves you right!"

Have you ever thought or said that? It's easy to do, especially if you have warned a believer of possible danger ahead.

A couple of years ago, one of my former students asked my counsel about a job he was about to take – a job that would involve quite a bit of travel. I counseled him not to take the job because I knew of some problems in his past, and this job would take him away from the care and fellowship of his local church. But he didn't follow my counsel, and he took the job.

Sure enough, the job was not conducive to his Christian growth – in fact, he soon went downhill in his Christian walk. A few months ago he called me again, and 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 say and 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!"