

12. The King of peace

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A former president of the Norwegian Academy of Sciences and historians from England, Egypt, Germany, and India have come up with some startling information: Since 3600 B.C. the world has known only 292 years of peace! During this period there have been 14,351 wars, large and small, in which 3.64 billion people have been killed. The value of the property destroyed would pay for a golden belt around the world 97.2 miles wide and 33 feet thick.

Since 650 B.C. there have also been 1656 arms races, only 16 of which have not ended in war. The remainder ended in the economic collapse of the countries involved.

Moreover, in excess of 8000 peace treaties were made – and broken.

It is obvious that the mankind cannot keep peace even though all of us want. What is the reason? James explains to us:

James 4:1-2 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war.

In light of “War on Terrorism” many people are completely scare to death. They long for peace on earth, no more killing. Yet they are so short-sighted that they totally miss out the One who can give true peace to all men.

Men’s idea of peace might be no wars around us, but people still have turmoils in their hearts. That means they don’t have true peace. The peace that comes from our God through Lord Jesus is beyond what anyone can imagine. Because it starts from inside.

This morning we are going to meet the King of Peace briefly and get to know Him for a short time.

A. THE FIRST RECORDED WAR IN THE BIBLE

Genesis 14:1-12 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. 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.

Archaeologists have confirmed the historical accuracy of this account of the first war recorded in the Bible. The Bible records a great deal of history. As Dr. A.T. Pierson said, "History is His story."

Whatever purposes the kings may have had in this war, God had something special in mind for Lot. He became a prisoner of war. Lot had looked at Sodom and moved toward Sodom, but now he was living in Sodom. We might have a hard time guess it from his conduct, but Lot was a righteous man according to 2 Peter 2:6-8. Where did he go wrong?

While in Egypt with Abram, Lot had gotten a taste of the world and enjoyed it. We don't see anywhere in the Scripture that Lot ever built an altar and sought the Lord, as did his uncle Abram. While Abram was the friend of God, but Lot was the friend of the world. Pretty soon, Lot conformed to the world. And when Sodom lost the war, Lot was condemned with the world.

That is a great example of the consequence that carnal Christians will face. If you are a carnal Christian and you are living in the same way as the world lives, then expect to suffer as the world will.

Lot's capture was God's way of disciplining him and reminding him that he had no business living in Sodom. God disciplines His children because He loves them and wants the best for them. If we don't listen to His rebukes, then He has to get our attention some other way. God's rebuke is usually very painful.

B. ABRAM TO THE RESCUE

Genesis 14:13-16 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.

This gives us some idea of the number of servants Abram had. In his own household, he could arm 318 men. How many did he have that he could not arm? For example, there would also be women and children and the old folks. It is like having 350 employees and their families in your payroll. I say that is a pretty good size company. Don't you think?

To have that many hired hands indicates that Abram was carrying on quite a business of raising cattle and sheep. I think that Abram was a regular Israel cowboy.

Abram did not get involved in the war until he heard that Lot had been captured, and then he began to act. He was insulated from the world, not isolated. He was independent, but not indifferent.

Abram had every excuse to let his nephew suffer the painful consequences of his own stupid decisions. But Lot was his "brother", so Abram practiced brotherly love and overcame evil with good.

Though a man of peace, Abram was prepared for war. We can find a great insight from how Abram used his own people to fight against the four kings from the east:

1) They were born in his house.

To overcome the worldly influence in our lives, we must realize that we cannot do it with our own willpower and strength. But we must have the relationship with Christ. In other words, we must be born-again in the house of God.

2) They were armed.

It takes more than zeal and courage to win a war. We must also have effective equipment. The Christian soldier must wear the whole armor of God and use the spiritual weapons God has provided according to Eph. 6:10-18. Our weapons are spiritual, not fleshly and we use them in the power of the Holy Spirit. Because we do not fight against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. The Word of God and prayer are our two most effective weapons, and we must use them by faith.

3) They were trained.

No matter how good their equipment is, if the soldiers are not trained, they will be easily defeated. One of the purposes of the local church is to train and equip God's people how to use the Bible effectively, how to pray, how to recognize the enemy, and how to follow orders as soldiers in the army of Christ.

Abram's army pursues the confederacy of five kings far a long distance about 100 miles to the north. The city of Dan is all the way up at the northern border of Israel.

Did Abram and his worldly nephew have a long talk as they rode back? Did Lot straighten up and join Abram in worship and adoration of God?

We cannot answer those questions, but we do know this: Neither the Lord's chastening nor the Lord's goodness in rescuing Lot did him any good. The goodness of God should have led him to repentance. But instead of repenting, Lot returned to Sodom. He could have been reunited with Abram, but he chose to go back to sin.

C. THE TWO KINGS FROM THE OPPOSITE SIDES

Genesis 14:17 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.

When Abram returned from battle, he was met by two kings: Bera, king of Sodom which means "burning", and Melchizedek, King of Salem which means "peace". While Bera offered Abram all the spoils in return for the people, Melchizedek gave Abram bread and wine. As we will find out Abram rejected the offer of the king of Sodom, but accepted the bread and wine from Melchizedek and gave him tithes of the spoils.

We have no idea of where Melchizedek came from, how he came to be in Canaan, how he came to be a king and priest of the true God, and how Abram came to know about him. We only know he was there.

The name Melchizedek 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.

One thing making Melchizedek unique is that he is both a king and a priest. 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.

Melchizedek served Abram bread and wine. Perhaps he even served them in a manner looking forward to our redeeming sacrifice, as the bread and wine of Passover and the Lord's table look at our redeeming sacrifice, Jesus Christ.

Melchizedek, as priest, did two things. He blessed Abram and he blessed God. Melchizedek shows a priest must connect with both God and man and has a ministry to both God and man.

Though Melchizedek seems like an obscure figure, he figures to be a very important Old Testament person.

Psalms 110:4 The Lord has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

Hebrews chapters 5 through 7 sheds more light about Melchizedek:

Hebrews 7:1-4 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abram returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 2 to whom also Abram gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," 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 Abram gave a tenth of the spoils.

Because of this passage, many Bible scholars have thought Melchizedek is actually an Old Testament appearance of Jesus. Like Melchizedek in Abram's day, Jesus Christ is our King-Priest in heaven, enabling us to enjoy righteousness and peace as we serve Him. Certainly we can see in the bread and wine a reminder of our Lord's death for us on the cross.

D. THANKS, BUT NO THANKS

Genesis 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: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion."

Following the victory, Abram faced a greater temptation as he met the king of Sodom. It is usually true that Satan tempts us immediately after a great spiritual victory. Satan met Christ in the wilderness after His baptism. Elijah fled in fear after his great work of faith on Mt. Carmel in 1 Kings 19.

The king of Sodom was giving a bait to Abram and get him to compromise by accepting the wealth of Sodom, but Abram refused. The wealth of Egypt had proved a snare. The wealth of Sodom would be worse. Abram had not been on his guard, he would have fallen for this subtle temptation and would have taken all the glory away from God. Additionally, Abram would have lost his testimony.

We just have witnessed a great comparison between the King of peace and the king of wickedness. We are living in the world of wickedness. I don't think I have to explain to you about the wickedness of this world.

In this wicked world, it is not that difficult to lose peace of God. All we have to do is take our eyes off from our Savior Lord Jesus. Then we get wrapped up in the whirlwind of turmoils of the world. Or we can walk away from God just like Lot did and lose that peace.

What if some of you already have been living in carnal life? You might wonder, "Is it over with me?" No, it is not over. Our God is the God of the second chance and the third chance. His mercy endures forever and His compassion fail not.

Yes, if you made a bed, you have to lie down. Yes, you will face the consequences of your sins. But the great thing about this is that you don't have to face it alone. God will be there with you every step of the way. Because He loves you, so He disciplines you. But after that discipline, like a true great Father, He will embrace you and stay with you.

In the midst of the fiery trials, in the midst of difficult times, in the midst of a great sandstorm of your spiritual wilderness, God is the Solid Rock where you can find a refuge. He is your Shelter. He will put you in the cleft of the Rock and covers you with His mercy.

Do you have needs today? Are you backed against the wall? Disturbed and disquieted? Uncertain about your future? Anxious over a strained relationship? Needing extra strength to go on, new hope or greater wisdom to handle the situation? Your solution can be found in one sentence: Submitting to God's sovereign will. We fret because what God wants may not be what we want. But our God never gives out that is not good for us. After all He is our Father and our God.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

Here we really have the Christian life in a nutshell. Here we see what it is to come to, to know, and to walk with Jesus Christ. This invitation stands today, but it will not stay that way forever. What is the invitation? Jesus says, "Come to Me." That's it. It is so simple, yet it is so profound. And we see this same invitation echoed throughout Scripture. Are you ready to come to Him and find peace?

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Peace that is not centered around Jesus is nothing more than a temporary pain reliever.

True peace only comes from God.

2) We must remember that complete submission to God's sovereign will is the best and only way to find God's peace.