

The Majesty of Melchizedek

Text: Gen. 14:17-24; 15:1

Introduction:

1. In this chapter we have the first battle between nations that is noted and recorded in Scripture. We now see Abraham functioning as a soldier in this battle as we follow his walk of faith. Abraham was a worshipper of the Lord but he was also a warrior for the Lord.
2. We are studying this battle under five headings:
 - The Description of the Battle (Vs. 1-12)
 - The Intervention in the Battle (Vs. 13-16)
 - The Visitation after the Battle (Vs. 17-20)
 - The Temptation after the Battle (Vs. 21-24)
 - The Consolation after the Battle (Gen. 15:1)
3. In this sermon, we will briefly review last week's message and then move on to the final three points of the outline that deal with the events that transpired after the battle was over.

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE BATTLE (VS. 1-12)

- A. The Coalitions in the Conflict (Vs. 1-2)
- B. The Catalyst for the Conflict (Vs. 3-5a)
- C. The Conquest of the Conflict (Vs. 5b-12)

II. THE INTERVENTION IN THE BATTLE (VS. 13-16)

- A. The Maturity of his Intervention (Vs. 13)
- B. The Motivation of his Intervention (Vs. 14a)
- C. The Methodology of his Intervention (Vs. 14b-16)
 1. The Right Soldiers for the Battle (Vs. 14b)
 2. The Right Strategy for the Battle (Vs. 15)
 3. The Right Success in the Battle (Vs. 15b, 16)

III. THE VISITATION AFTER THE BATTLE (VS. 17-20)

Abraham will now encounter two kings. The first king he encounters is named Melchizedek. Let's study this mysterious and wonderful Person who appears to Abraham after the battle. Consider 6 truths the text outlines concerning Melchizedek.

A. The Identity of Melchizedek (Vs. 18a)

Who is Melchizedek? Were it not for Psalm 110:4 and the Book of Hebrews (6:20; 7:1-28) we would be limited in our understanding of Melchizedek and would likely conclude that he was merely a special king in the land of Canaan who was a contemporary of Abraham with some sort of priestly function. Amongst Bible believers there are two main positions as to the identity of Melchizedek:

1. Melchizedek is a Type of Christ. This would mean that Melchizedek was a godly king in the land of Canaan in Abraham's day who typified the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many types in the Old Testament that foreshadow Christ (e.g., the Passover).

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2. Melchizedek is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ (a Christophany). This seems to best fit the exalted language of Hebrews 7:3 which speaks of Melchizedek's nature as being eternal – "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." Some might ask, "then why does it say he was made "like unto the Son of God" rather than "he was the Son of God". The simple answer is that this is a typical phrase for an Old Testament Christophany. For example, Daniel 3:25 "He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is **like the Son of God.**"
3. What do both positions have in common? Both agree that Melchizedek speaks to us of Christ. So, whether a type or a theophany, this fragment of history is full of Christ.
4. F.B. Meyer writes, "Christ is here! The passage is fragrant with the ointment of His name. Our hands drop with myrrh, and our fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh, as we lay them upon the handles of this lock (Cant. 5:5). Let us go aside from the busy rush of life, and think long, deep thoughts of Him who is the Alpha and Omega of Scripture, and of saintly hearts. And let us draw from the unsearchable depths of his nature, by the bucket of this mysterious record touching Melchizedek, the King of Salem."
5. Note: The timing of this Revelation of Christ to Abraham is significant. It came just after the battle was over. It is important in spiritual warfare that we know the Captain of our Salvation.

B. The Offices of Melchizedek (Vs. 18)

1. You will notice that Melchizedek holds a combined office of priest and king. This is significant when you consider that in the Old Testament the two offices were kept strictly separate. Kings like Saul, and Uzziah intruded into the priestly office and came under the judgment of God. Saul dies prematurely on Mount Gilboa, and Uzziah finished out his days as a leper. In a world of fallen man, this division of power was a safeguard against the deification of human rulers.
2. However, in the Lord Jesus Christ the three anointed offices of Prophet, Priest and King are safely and gloriously united.
 - a. As Prophet, all revelation converges in Him as the Word.
 - b. As Priest, He is propitiatory sacrifice, mediating Priest, and object of worship. This is the first priest mentioned in the Bible. Importantly, Christ's priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood as it is an eternal priesthood. Psalm 110:4 "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, **Thou art a priest for ever** after the order of Melchizedek." As sinners, we need a Priest, one who can represent us to an All-Holy God.
 - c. As King, He is Ruler and Sovereign, the Most High over all the universe. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

C. The Titles of Melchizedek (Vs. 18)

1. King of Righteousness. The title 'Melchizedek' means "King of Righteousness". What an apt title for our Lord Jesus Christ. He is

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the all righteous One without the tiniest spot or blemish of sin upon His Holy Person. "Truly this describes the Lord Jesus Christ who is altogether righteous. He is the One through His redemptive work made it possible for sinful men to become righteous through salvation and he is the One who will reign as King of Righteousness during the Millennium." (Butler)

2. King of Peace. The title "King of Salem" means "King of Peace". Salem is the early name for the city that would later be called Jerusalem (See Psalm 76:2). The Son of God's association with Jerusalem goes all the way back to Genesis! Christ will reign from Jerusalem during the Millennium.
3. Note the order of these titles. Righteousness comes before peace. There can be no true peace without righteousness. So long as evil reigns, there will be nothing but chaos, war and ruin. And the only way to have peace with God is to be made righteous by the Righteous One through salvation. Remember, God's righteousness is not earned through good works but is given by grace to the repentant, believing sinner.
4. F.B. Meyer writes, "Not first peace at any price, or at the cost of righteousness, but righteousness first – the righteousness of His Personal character; the righteous meeting, on our behalf, of the just demands of a Divine and holy law... There be plenty who are willing enough to have Him as Priest, who refuse to accept Him as King. But it will not do. He must be King, or He will not be Priest. And He must be King in this order, first making thee right, then giving thee His peace that passeth all understanding."

D. The Ministry of Melchizedek (Vs. 18b)

1. Melchizedek brings bread and wine to minister to Abraham. No doubt this was for the purpose of refreshing Abraham and his men after the exhausting battle they had just endured. Refreshing weary saints is something our Wonderful Saviour loves to do in our lives!
2. This highlights an important principle of spiritual warfare. It is so important to spend time in the presence of Christ and be refreshed and renewed after times of intense spiritual conflict.
3. The bread and wine are significant symbols of Christ. They are the emblems of the New Testament Lord's Table to remind the believer of the body of Christ that was sacrificed and the blood of Christ that was shed for our redemption. Need renewal as a believer? Be refreshed at the remembrance of the cross and what our Saviour accomplished on our behalf.

E. The Blessings of Melchizedek (Vs. 19-20a)

1. A blessing pronounced upon Abraham (Vs. 19). Melchizedek invokes a Divine blessing upon Abraham. Look at the title and the description of Almighty God in this verse:
 - a. The Most High God (El Elyon) – speaks of God's high and lofty position above all things and his superiority to all the false gods and goddesses created by man.
 - b. The Possessor of heaven and earth – emphasizes God's sovereign ownership of the universe.

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- c. Note: This represented a new Revelation to Abraham of His God. It obviously impacted Abraham as He would use the same title of God in his refusal to the king of Sodom (Vs. 22).
2. A blessing pronounced upon the Most High God (Vs. 20a)
 - a. God is given the glory for the victory over the enemy. Any victory in the Christian life should cause us to bless and worship our God, not ourselves!
 - b. We need to return to a God-focused and God-glorifying kind of Christianity in the “selfie” world we live in today.

F. The Tithes to Melchizedek (Vs. 20b)

We know that Abraham was the one who gave tithes from the Book of Hebrews – “To whom also Abraham gave a **tenth** part of all;” (Heb. 7:2). Abraham intuitively recognizes Melchizedek’s spiritual superiority and immediately submits to his authority. This is the first mention of tithing in the Bible. We should note that tithing came in centuries before the Law of Moses. It is a well-established principle of giving woven throughout the Bible. Jacob also tithed before the Mosaic Law was introduced (Gen. 28:22). Consider four key points about Biblical tithing:

1. The **What** of Biblical Tithing. A tithe is a tenth of one’s income. We honour the Lord by giving him the first portion of our income. Prov. 3:9-10 “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”
2. The **Why** of Biblical Tithing. We tithe as an act of loving worship to our wonderful Saviour. Abraham gave tithes to Son of God and so should we! If you view tithing as a law you are compelled to obey, you will resent tithing. However, if you view it as an act of worship and a part of your relationship with Him, it will be a joy for you. F.B. Meyer states, “This ancient custom shames us Christians. The patriarch gave more to the representative of Christ than many of us give to Christ Himself. Come, if you have never done so before, resolve to give your Lord a tithe or your time, your income, your all. “Bring all the tithes into His storehouse.” Nay, thou glorious One, we will not rest content with this; take all, for all is Thine.” A godly deacon once remarked to his pastor, “If the Old Testament Jew under Law could tithe, how much more ought New Testament Christians under grace!” (Wiersbe)
3. The **When** of Biblical Tithing. Giving is to be a part of the Christian day of worship. “Upon **the first day of the week** let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” (1 Cor. 16:2) That’s why we take up offerings on the Lord’s Day! We use a bag like Christ and the disciples, not a box like the Old Dispensation in the temple.
4. The **Where** of Biblical Tithing. We bring our tithes to God’s house which in this dispensation is the local church. “Bring ye all the tithes **into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house**, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it.*” (Ma. 3:10) The tithes help cover the running costs of the local church. We do not tithe to para

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church organisations, charities or ministries! The tithes are to be brought to the house of God.

5. Note the connection between tithing and blessing. Andrew Murray writes, "Christ gives us the blessing, we give Him the tithes. The tithes to God are the acknowledgment of His right to all. Our High Priest has a right to the surrender of all we have, as belonging to Him, to the willing sacrifice of all He asks or needs for His service. The connection between the tithes and the blessing is closer than we know. The more unreservedly we place all that we have at His disposal, the more we in very deed forsake all for His sake, the richer will our experience be of the fulness and the power which our High Priest can bless."

IV. THE TEMPTATION AFTER THE BATTLE (VS. 21-24)

Abraham now encounters Bera, the King of Sodom. What a contrast to his audience with the King of Salem (Melchizedek). Oftentimes our greatest victories are followed by our greatest temptations. Consider several points about this temptation:

A. The Timing of the Temptation (Vs. 21)

1. The temptation came right when Abraham and his men were "returning from the slaughter of the kings" (Heb. 7:1). They had just seen a great victory over a formidable foe but were about to face an enemy of a more subtil kind. How you handle success says just as much, if not more about you than how you handle trials. Andrew Bonar warns, "Let us be watchful after the victory as before the battle."
2. Griffith Thomas notes, "The crowning hour of success is a good test of character...How a man behaves at the moment of victory often affords a supreme revelation of character and spiritual power."
3. Mountain top experiences are often followed by valleys of testing. They are vulnerable times when we must take care lest the devil ensnare us with a more subtil, deceptive approach.
4. Illustration: Ahab and Benhadad (1 Kings 20:26-43).

B. The Test of the Temptation (Vs. 21)

1. Abraham was offered all the wealth of Sodom. Imagine such an offer! Apparently 'Bera' means 'gift' "suggesting that the world bargains for your allegiance." (Wiersbe) But the wealth of Sodom was tainted. Moreover, this offer was coming from a wicked, reprobate king whose motives could not be trusted. "It seems Abraham had learned from Egypt that taking wealth from a pagan king was fraught with danger." (Morris) Abraham also recognized that the victory was due to God and so would not take any of the goods.
2. Someone wisely observed, "Let us beware of the favours of the world even more than of its threats." (H.L. Rossier)
3. Sometimes Satan comes as a roaring lion to devour. It is usually not hard to discern when this happens! But at other times he comes as a serpent to deceive and this is often when we get duped.
4. Remember, the devil's offers ALWAYS come with Ts & Cs!

C. The Triumph over the Temptation (Vs. 22-24)

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What was the secret to Abraham's victory? There are three aspects to his victory over this temptation:

1. The Preparation of Abraham (Vs. 22). Abraham's response to the king of Sodom reflected his recent audience with the King of Salem. His audience with Melchizedek prepared him to face this temptation. Knowing that you are blessed by "the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth" gives you a right perspective of the worlds empty trinkets. Who needs to be enriched with tainted pleasures when we have been blessed by the God of heaven who owns all things?!
2. The Promise of Abraham (Vs. 22-23a). Somehow God had given Abraham the wisdom and foresight to preempt this situation and prepare for it before it happened. His godly commitment to his God meant that he knew how to respond straight away when the temptation came. Heart commitment to our God and His Ways puts you on victory ground when confronted with the enemy. If we are in a right relationship with God, our response to temptation should be quick and decisive.
3. The Perspective of Abraham (Vs. 23b). Abraham had godly discernment to see where accepting the king of Sodom's offer might lead. It would give the king of Sodom a measure of leverage over Abraham and would compromise Abraham's separated stand and testimony. "Abraham did not want to be dependent in any way upon the king of Sodom. Abraham evidently had an accurate view of Sodom's character, unlike his nephew Lot." (Thomas) Having a clear-eyed view of the world and its façade is so vital if we are going to resist temptation. "You cannot be a servant of God and a celebrity in the world at the same time". (Wiersbe)

V. THE CONSOLATION AFTER THE BATTLE (VS. 15:1)

God's Words to Abraham after these events were over are full of comfort and re-assurance. So often we see God's ministry of assurance in Abraham's life at such times. God promised that He would be:

A. His Protection (Vs. 1a)

1. This is a significant promise in light of what had just transpired. While our faith is often strengthened when we see a great victory, sometimes doubts and fears can also begin to creep into our hearts after the dust has settled. Perhaps Abraham felt his vulnerability in a strange land with many potential enemies. Would God come to his aid again in the future if the need arose? It appears that Abraham was fearful at this time as God exhorts him to "fear not".
2. God promised that He was Abraham's shield. God Himself was Abraham's Protector. This figure of God being the believer's shield is repeated often in the Psalms. For example, Psalm 28:7 "The LORD *is my strength and my shield*; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him."

B. His Prize (Vs. 1b)

1. Another significant promise in light of the fact Abraham had just turned down the offer of incredible wealth from the king of Sodom.

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Again, after such victories, doubts can begin to creep in. Was that the wisest choice? Did I do the right thing turning down that promotion that would have reduced my church attendance each week? How will I make up the short fall in funds?

2. God assures Abraham that He Himself would be his “exceeding great reward.” Can there be any greater reward than to be blessed by the God of heaven? Can there be any blessing greater than being in union with the Lord Jesus Christ? Can there be any blessing greater than being blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ? Can there be any greater assurance than knowing that God will take care of our needs as we reject the world’s compromised offers and trust Him?
3. “Happy they who prefer to be pensioners on the daily providence of God to being dependent on the gold of Sodom – the wagers of iniquity.” (F.B. Meyer)

Conclusion:

1. Are you trusting in Christ to lead you into a deeper life of fellowship with Him in the Holiest of all?
2. What is your attitude towards giving, specifically the principle of tithing to the Lord?
3. What subtle temptation of the devil confronts you now? Do you value the spiritual blessings of God above everything this world offers?
4. Are you discouraged and disheartened in your Christian life at present? Be comforted and assured by the precious promises of God.