



A Study of the Book of GENESIS



Joe M. Easterling - Minister of Discipleship

WEEK EIGHT

The Story of Lot and the Fall of Sodom & Gomorrah (Genesis 14, 18-19)

The stories in Genesis surrounding the impetuous Lot and Abraham's fatherly care of him are often overlooked in Bible studies, often upstaged by the wickedness and utter destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. But this much-neglected portion of Scripture is saturated with items of consummate interest to a child of God. For instance, Chapter 14 records several firsts: the first battle, the priest, the first king, the first war, the first bread and wine, and the first tithe. These firsts are particularly significant for understanding God's design for His Kingdom and people.

Take _____. In this mysterious figure, the Bible's first mention of the _____ sharply contrasts the difference between God's thinking about priesthood—a royal priest after the order of Melchizedek—and the ritual priest after the order of Aaron. Similarly, the first mention of a _____ shows that God's ideal king is not a warrior king (Chedorlaomar), nor a wise king (Amraphel of Shinar), and especially not a wicked king (Bera of Sodom), but a worshipping king like Melchizedek.

The Bible's first mention of _____ reveals the attitude of Abram, a righteous believer of God, toward it. Abram was a separated believer but not an isolated believer. Abram detested Sodom and the evils it revealed in, and he stayed aloof from the wicked cities' trappings and even its people, but he did stick his head in the ground and pretend it did not exist. For his dear, weak, reckless nephew, Lot was down there, and for Lot's sake, Abram was willing to get involved.ⁱ

Genesis 14 – Lot's Captivity, Abram's Rescue, & Melchizedek the Priest

- **vv. 1-3: The Invasion**

- Northeastern Coalition: King of Shinar (_____), King of Ellasar (_____), King of Elam (_____), and King of Goiim (SE _____)

Chedorlaomer, King of Elam, was acknowledged as the coalition's leader.ⁱⁱ

- City-states around the Salt Sea: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (Zoar)

At this time, kingdoms were quite small, probably not much more than _____-_____. Nevertheless, they were fierce and cruel, with the potential to wipe out all the inhabitants of a territory

One of these highly prized regions was surrounding the _____, called the “vale of Siddim” (which means “valley of fields”). Quite possibly, the Salt Sea (the Dead Sea) was not originally salty.ⁱⁱⁱ

Another attraction of this valley was that it was near the _____ of two major travel routes. The King’s Highway ran down from Damascus in northern Palestine to south of the Salt Sea. At that point, it was intersected by a prominent caravan route running from the Great Sea (Mediterranean) to Mesopotamia. The conjunction of these two highways gave the region strategic importance.^{iv}

- **vv. 5-12: The Rebellion and War**

Verse 4 records that for 12 years, this northeastern coalition had placed the local kings under tribute to Chedorlaomer, and then they rebelled. In response, the coalition launched a military campaign that crushed all of the city-states on _____ of the Salt Sea (the precise location of these cities are unknown), before it set its sights back on the southern cities where the rebellion had mounted in the first place.^v

The invading coalition decisively defeated the rebelling cities so that the “kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled.” Verse 10 records that in their flight, some fell (literally “lowered themselves”) into “_____.” These pits were common. This area was so rich in bitumen (a natural mineral similar to tar) that large amounts would bubble to the surface. These “pits” (same word throughout the OT for water wells) were large holes dug out to extra the mineral. These man-made holes provided refuge for some of these escaping kings.^{vi}

In the wake of their victory, Chedorlaomer’s armies gathered up all the possessions of the vanquished cities, including its valuable survivors (v. 16), and headed north again.

Unfortunately for them, however, one of their captives was _____. Despite his attraction to carnality, Lot was a “_____” (2 Peter 2:7-8), and a nephew of Abram.

- **vv. 13-17: Abram Rescues Lot**

Verse 13 contains the first mention of the name “_____,” applying it to Abram. While its origin is uncertain, typically, the designation of term in early times was used only as a point of reference for foreigners or _____ (e.g., Joseph in Egypt, Gen. 39:14-17; Israelite slaves in reference to the Egyptian masters, Exo. 2:11; Jonah to the sailors, Jon. 1:9; etc.).^{vii} Aside from this idea, many scholars believe the term “Habiru” is derived from the name of Eber, the great-grandson of Shem and distant ancestor of Abram. While

archaeological texts soon after Abram did not seem to apply it exclusively to the children of Israel, it still might refer to the descendants of _____. Abram had many other nomadic descendants besides the Israelites.^{viii}

At this point, Abram has become a chieftain of a sizable tribe. From his own house, he gathered _____ to pursue the kings and rescue Lot.

Abram caught up to the northeastern armies at the northern border of Canaan, in the land of (what would become) _____. He uses the strategy of a nighttime ambush. Splitting up his troops, Abram attacked the army from different directions at once, confusing and demoralizing the armies. They fled, but Abram's army chased after them north of _____, over 50 miles, rescuing Lot and the other captives and retrieving the possessions taken from the conquered cities.

- **vv. 18-24: Abram & Melchizedek**

The final verses of this chapter have one of the most remarkable and highly symbolic stories in the Bible—Abram's encounter with Melchizedek. Melchizedek is portrayed as the principal king of the region in that he receives a portion of the war booty.^{ix}

His name means "my king is _____" (Heb. 7:2), and he is recorded as king of Salem ("king of _____") and "the priest of the most High God" (v. 18). He is the first priest mentioned in the Bible (as well as the term "peace"), and he apparently has a unique relationship with God. Melchizedek blesses Abram, describing him as belonging to *El Elyon* (the "_____"). This designation stresses the absolute authority over the multitude of deities worshipped in Canaan. Melchizedek also states that Abram's God is "the _____ of heaven and earth," referring to the creation account in Genesis 1.^x

The communal meal of _____ and _____ they shared was a typical arrangement to serve as a peace agreement between them. Often peace treaties of the ancient Middle East refer to the provision of food in wartime by allies.

The symbolism of this encounter with Melchizedek is rich. First of all, there is no question that this first priest was a _____ of _____. Both Psalm 101 and the Book of Hebrews draw many parallels between the two to prove this point.

➤ *Psalm 101*

➤ *Hebrews 7:1-21*

❖ Who is Melchizedek?

Several questions bubble up surrounding this mysterious figure. The descriptions of this figure in Psalm 101 and Hebrews 7 make Melchizedek that much more mysterious. At least three answers have been seriously offered.^{xi}

View #1 – Melchizedek was a local chieftain who was _____ by God to be a priest-king in an idolatrous society, and so a type of Christ.

View #2 – An ancient Hebrew tradition suggests Melchizedek was the patriarch _____ who was still alive in Abraham’s day. Thus “Melchizedek” is a title, not a name; more importantly, the emphasis is on the order of Melchizedek rather than an individual.

View #3 – Melchizedek was not only a type of Christ, but _____ (a Christophany).

Another significant symbolic image is the first mention of bread and wine as a peace offering meal. Such elements of the meal doubtless serve as a shadow of the broken _____ and spilled _____ served up by Christ as a means for an eternal peace and the end of the enmity between God and man.

In verses 21-24, the King of Sodom asks that his people be returned to him. However, Abram refuses the wartime booty, explaining that he had sworn to *El Elyon*, whom he identified as “the LORD” (Yahweh), not to profit from the military victory.

Genesis 18:16-33 – Abraham’s Intercedes for Sodom

In the final section of this chapter, we find the first occurrence and one of the most remarkable examples of _____ in the Scriptures. Abraham was naturally concerned about Lot and his family, but it seems possible that he knew others in Sodom as well, having saved them several years earlier from the northeastern invaders.

During this exchange, God gives a striking testimony to Abraham’s character (in contrast to Sodom & Gomorrah and even Lot).

➤ ***Genesis 18:17-19***

The verb “_____” indicates the idea that God viewed Abraham as an intimate friend.

Abraham first prays that the city might be spared if there were fifty righteous people found in it, then forty-five, then forty, then thirty, then twenty, and finally only ten. Each time God agrees to his request so that if only ten righteous people could be found in Sodom, God would not have destroyed the city. Through this exchange, several implications become clear:

- 1) God _____ to bring judgment to any city or person.
- 2) Abraham's prayer was highly _____—in no way presumptuous—yet _____ and _____.
- 3) Even a tiny _____ of the godly can remarkably influence many.
- 4) Lot's lack of influence demonstrates that, though he was deemed "righteous," the _____ was _____ in any way a _____ in his way of life.^{xii}

Genesis 19 – The Failure of Lot and the Desolation of Sodom & Gomorrah

vv. 1-3. This was the place that Lot called home, and his digression from God's provision to worldly pleasures must not be overlooked. Lot first "pitched his tent _____ Sodom" (Gen. 13:12), then "dwelt _____ Sodom" (Gen. 14:12), and finally "_____ in the _____ of Sodom" (Gen. 19:1). Lot chose to live in Sodom because of its apparent riches (Gen. 13), and was intent on becoming a citizen. He even gave up his two daughters to a couple of local men.

When a host offered a guest the opportunity to spend the night, he was also accepting responsibility for their safety and well-being. This offer was typically meant for up to three days. However, after begging them to stay in his home, he suggested they _____ to leave, giving them _____.

vv. 4-13. The danger Lot was concerned about regarding these two men of God being spotted out in public came to bear. Lot attempts to reason with them. However, when faced w/ a great moral dilemma, Lot was willing to _____ the _____ as a father and the safety of his children to protect his _____ as a host. He offers his two daughters up to the crowd's perverted demands. Lot's two daughters were still virgins, though they were betrothed to be married.

Lot's offered compromise was not well received. Lot lived as one of them and apparently accepted their lifestyle, but when the time came to take a stand, he is _____ seen as a _____ to them _____ as a _____. As the crowd turned on Lot, the angels miraculously rescued him and warn him to escape the city before God's judgment falls.

vv. 14-29. Lot had become so entrenched in the trappings of Sodom that he apparently had no influence even over the members of his family! His sons-in-law did not take Lot’s warning seriously, assuming he was _____. Ultimately, Lot’s lack of spiritual leadership cost him his future _____-in-law, his _____, and even his _____ purity. In contrast, we are reminded that it was because of Abraham that even Lot was rescued from Sodom’s destruction (vv. 27-29).

vv. 30-38. Lot eventually lands in the mountainous outskirts of Zoar (“_____”). Lot and his family made up four, which means he only had to impact six people for God and the city would have been saved. Sadly, even Lot’s daughters followed in their father’s footsteps toward a worldly focus. They felt they had to follow “the _____ of all the earth” (v. 31).

◆ **Genesis 12:1, 4** – What may have caused the various crises between Abram and Lot?

- The descendants of Lot:

ⁱ John Phillips, *Exploring Genesis* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 125.

ⁱⁱ John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 45.

ⁱⁱⁱ Morris, *Genesis Record*, 312-313.

^{iv} Phillips, *Exploring Genesis*, 126.

^v Morris, *Genesis Record*, 314.

^{vi} Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, *Bible Background Commentary: OT*, 46.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Morris, *Genesis Record*, 316.

^{ix} Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, *Bible Background Commentary: OT*, 47.

^x Morris, *Genesis Record*, 318.

^{xi} Ibid., 319-321.

^{xii} Ibid., 343-344.