

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #34

Genesis 14:1-34

Ever since Abram has been promised God's blessings clear back in the opening verses of Genesis 12, things have not been all that smooth. He has had to move at least eight times. He has faced famine. He has made some wrong, foolish decisions. He had to say goodbye to his own brother's son, Lot. All of the land, which he is supposed to possess, is possessed by those not right with God.

GOD WILL PROTECT, PRESERVE, PROSPER, BLESS AND HONOR ONE FAITHFUL TO HIM EVEN IN THE MIDST OF A CHAOTIC, HOSTILE WORLD ENVIRONMENT.

Those who negatively tamper with God's faithful people will receive many destructive things from the hand of God. Dr. Wiersbe said, in this chapter Abram fulfills three roles:

1) The role of a watcher (14:1-12); 2) The role of a warrior (14:13-16); 3) The role of a worshipper (14:17-24) (Vol. 2, pp. 31-32).

NARRATIVE REALITY #1 - Abram's nephew is taken hostage. 14:1-12

What is described here is anything but harmonious situations - there is no peace or tranquility in the land that is supposed to be Abram's.

Fact #1 - The uniting of the powers came through war. 14:1-3

The political climate is the first four kings of verse 1 are united and in war with the five kings of verse 2. The thing uniting these forces is war and that kind of unity won't last long.

Fact #2 - The rebellion of the powers was united by war. 14:4

The major power and problem is Chedorlaomer who was forcing all others to serve him.

Fact #3 - The reaction of the King of Elam was one of war. 14:5-12

God is using this political mess to make Lot a prisoner of war and it will be this that will lead to the destruction of the Assyrian army. Lot's choice to move to Sodom and live in Sodom (14:12) had led him into captivity. When you are God's property and you get into things you shouldn't, you'll be taken captive and God will allow negative things to hit you hard. He is trying to knock some sense back into you.

NARRATIVE REALITY #2 - Abram's nephew is recovered. 14:13-16

It had been at least 14 years since the separation of Abram and Lot, but when the Assyrians laid their hands on Lot, they laid their hands on the wrong man. One of the men who had escaped

from Chedorlaomer came and told Abram that Lot had been taken. It is clear from verse 13 that Moses wants to stress Abram's special relationship to God because, for the first time, he uses the word Hebrew. The actual name "Hebrew" seems to emphasize land, whereas the name "Israel" seems to emphasize ancestor (Gesenius, p. 604). This is a distinct lineage of people entitled to a distinct land.

According to verse 14, Abram took a paltry 318 trained men to go to get Lot from the most dominating, fearful power in the world. But Abram and his men have one great advantage - the LORD God of the Bible.

We may observe that these 318 men were: 1) Born into Abram's family; 2) Armed with proper weapons; 3) They were trained to use those weapons; 4) They were willing to believe in their leader and follow Abram's lead; 5) They fought as a focused and united group and they won.

You take a church, regardless of size, in which people are born into the family of God and they are armed with God's Word and can defend the Word of God and they are willing to believe in and follow their leader and they will fight and win many wars for God. They will do business and win big battles for God and see God do some powerful things, regardless of the numbers.

NARRATIVE REALITY #3 - Abram's victory is impacting. 14:17-24

Sometimes a real time of danger and threat hits after the battle is won. Abram reacts differently to two kings.

Reaction #1 - The reaction of the King of Sodom. 14:17

These kings were very impressed with Abram's victory and they not only wanted to congratulate him, but to offer him great wealth.

Reaction #2 - The reaction of the King of Salem. 14:18

The king of Salem was named Melchizedek, who was both a king and a priest. **Salem is Jerusalem and this is the first mention of this important city in the Bible.**

Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine and blessing. The bread and wine were certainly not because Abram needed food, for he enjoyed all the spoils of battle victory. This was for worship purposes and there can be no doubt that this was a picture of one who would come, whose body would be broken and blood would be shed. The One who had overseen this victory, would eventually come through Abram's line and permit His body to be broken and His blood to be shed.

Melchizedek praised Abram and Abram gave him a tenth of everything he had (14:20), because he recognized that Melchizedek was a true priest of the most High God. Notice that Abram gave his offering to a real person and considered it to be an offering given to God. When you give your offerings, even though some goes to a real person, God views it as an offering given to Him.

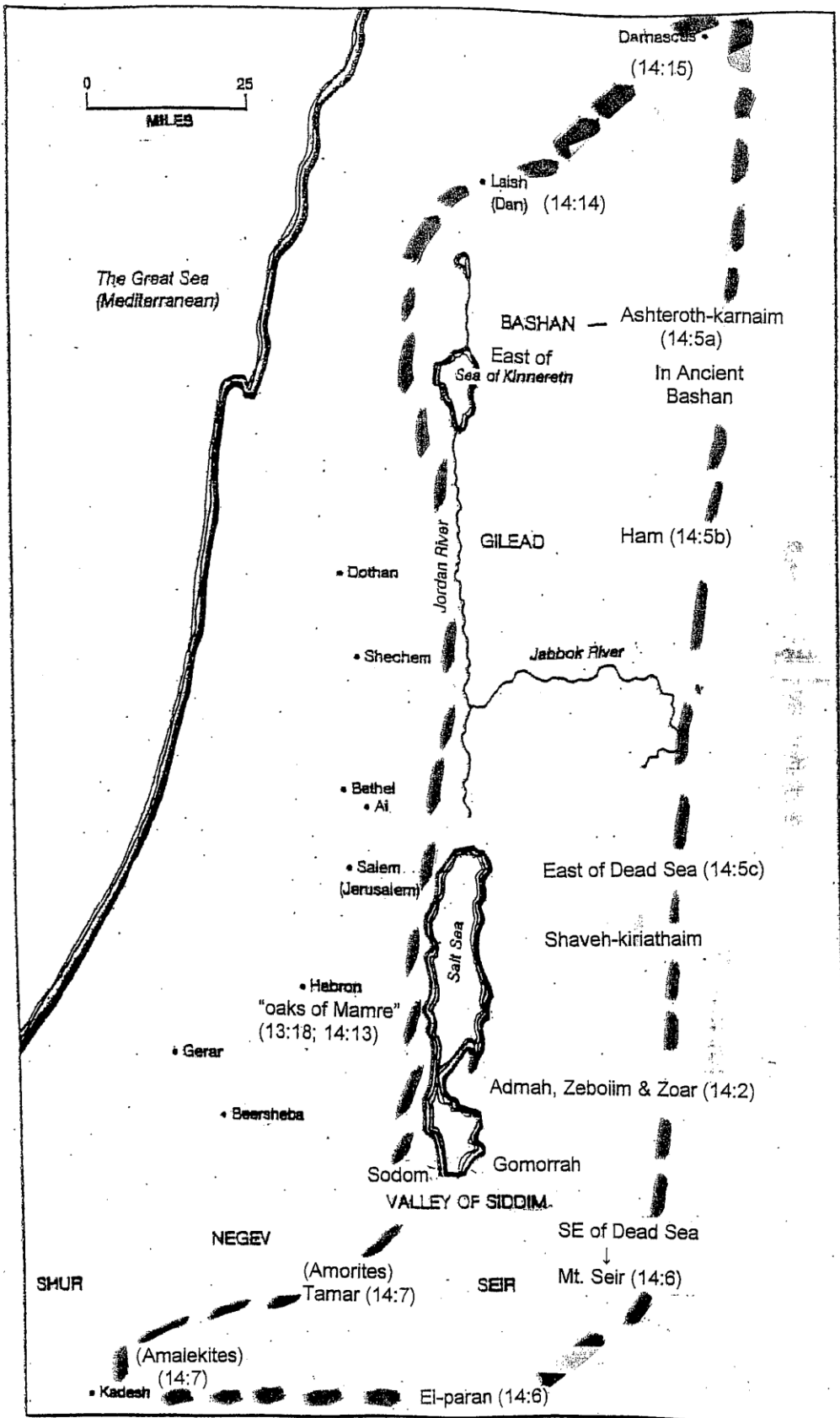
The giving to God of a ten percent of everything offering is obviously something Abram did long before the O.T. law. Abram did this and so did Jacob (Genesis 28:22). Both of these men were greatly blessed of God, but that is not what prompted them to give. They gave because they had already been blessed. There is an old saying about giving - "If you give because it pays, it won't pay." Under grace ten percent may be a good place to begin, but the prevailing principle is "as God has prospered" us. For some, ten percent is a major sacrifice, but for others the sacrifice level is not the same. The point here is that a good starting point is ten percent.

But notice verse 21, when the King of Sodom saw that Abram had given things to Melchizedek, he naturally assumed that he would also give things to him. The king of Sodom had no clue as to the theological implications of Abram's gift. Abram knew that this king was a scheming, manipulative man and Abram wanted to make certain that in no way would he take from or offer one thing to this evil king. The King is dangling money in front of Abram and telling him - I'll keep the people and you take the goods. Abram knew this king was evil and he refused to even take a thread or sandal from him.

Dr. S.L. Johnson said, "Many are willing, even anxious, to have the support of pagan foundations, institutions, and individuals, shallowly offering as an excuse, "The devil has had the money long enough, now it for the Lord to have it to use!" You will also notice that Abram offered him no recital of his "needs," nor did he leave with him a self-addressed return envelope for remitting of love offering" (Study #27, p. 5).

Abram had faith in God and that was demonstrated in his giving money to Melchizedek and in refusing money from the King of Sodom. Abram took nothing - but he let his Gentile buddies - Aner, Eschol and Mamre have their share. He did not try to impose his righteous convictions on his allies. He let them make up their own minds. He didn't tell them to give 10% to Melchizedek, he quietly lived his life in a way faithful to God.

There comes a point in all of our lives in which we must make a choice between two ruling Kings. The king of Sodom - the king of the flesh, or the king of Salem - the king of righteousness. Which is it for us?



CANAAN IN THE TIME OF THE PATRIARCHS

Map taken from *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, p. 51