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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2050 ~ Abraham Rescues Lot.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

Sometimes we're told very little about a person in the Scriptures but they were very important to God. One such person is Melchizedek. He was a king of Salem, which was a forerunner of the name 'Jerusalem' but he was also a priest of the Most High God. God had assigned Melchizedek to both these roles before Abram had returned from Egypt to Canaan.

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In Genesis, Chapter 14, there is mentioned a war happening between a military group of 4 kings from the northeast region around Babylon, and another group of 5 kings from the Jordan plain and the Dead Sea areas. These 5 kings had faithfully paid tribute money to one of the 4 kings for 12 years, but then they'd rebelled. The following year, the group of 4 kings came to make war and subdue the rebelling kings so they would again have pay their tribute money as they'd done in the past.

However, while still in the battle path, the Babylonian kings began plundering each city or village before savagely destroying it so that they couldn't be attacked from the rear. When they'd done this and dealt with the smaller tribes, they then went to battle with all the cities and villages on the Jordan plain. The aggressors went from southern Syria to central Sinai and they left the countryside in ruins and waste. According to the archaeologists, for hundreds of years after that, the entire area was like an abandoned cemetery. Yet many of those people who escaped capture from the Babylonian kings, built new houses and cities in other places.

Two of the 5 rebel kings came from the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah. They too, were defeated and all their possessions taken away by the victors. Many people were taken too, and Lot, Abram's nephew, was among them. The rebel kings fled and their supporters hid away in the mountains. Then the Babylonian kings gathered up all the possessions of the defeated cities, including the women, children, servants and captured soldiers, and they headed back north again.

The kings took Lot and his family captive as they'd been living in Sodom at this time. Lot is described in 2 Peter, Chapter 2, as being a righteous man in God's sight. And being a nephew of Abram, who had received God's call to possess the land of Canaan, God didn't allow Lot to remain a prisoner of the Babylonian kings.

For the first time in Scripture in Verse 13, Abram is called a Hebrew, which is possibly from 'Eber', who was the great-grandson of Shem and a distant cousin to Abram. When Abram heard of Lot's capture, he and his trained men, together with others living in Mamre, pursued the 4 kings with their stolen loot and prisoners of war. Abram only had a few men who accompanied him to fight against a large experienced army. By the time Abram had caught up with them, the victorious armies were relaxing, enjoying the spoils of war and not expecting a sudden night attack. But God was with Abram and his men. Abram attacked from all directions and the armies turned in fright and fled.

Abram pursued them all the way to a place close to Damascus, reclaiming Lot, other captives and all the stolen possessions. Those of the invading armies who survived this unexpected attack would have straggled home, shocked at the way things had ended to a mighty wave of conquest. Nothing of this battle was ever recorded in the records of the Babylonian kings as such men only ever recorded their successes and never mentioned their defeats. But the Bible mentions it. Abram, however, wouldn't have boasted of such a victory either, as he knew very well that the victory had come from the Lord and not from his own abilities or battle skill.

In Abram's victory, we see a further fulfilment of God's promise to be with Abram and bless others through him. We see those who joined with Abram prospered with God's protection, while those (like Lot) who separated from Abram, didn't have the same protection.

When Abram returned to the region of the Jordan Valley plain, he was met by the king of Salem, Melchizedek. Melchizedek's name means 'king of righteousness' and his title 'King of Salem' also means 'King of Peace.'" Melchizedek lived in Canaan, which had a reputation of being both wicked and demonic, and so his testimony to God while in such a place was amazing in itself.

Melchizedek is the first mentioned priest in the Bible and he obviously had a special relationship with the One True God.

In the New Testament book of Hebrews, Chapter 7, it says of Melchizedek that "there is no record of Melchizedek's father or mother or any of his ancestors and no record of his birth and death. He is like the Son of God; he remains a priest forever."

Melchizedek was so great that Abram gave him a tenth of the spoils from the battle and Melchizedek blessed Abram, the person with the promises of God. It's always understood that the person giving the blessing is greater than the one being blessed.

The third grandson of Abram was called Levi. He moved to Egypt with Jacob's family to avoid a famine in Canaan and he died there, aged 137 years. Moses and Aaron were two of Levi's great-grandsons born in Egypt. God had a special assignment for the Levites. After Moses had built the tabernacle of God for worshipping God in the wilderness, it was Aaron's and the Levites' duty to pack up the tabernacle whenever the Israelites moved to a new place. When the people entered the land of Canaan over 400 years later, the Levites weren't given any allocation of land to grow any crops but instead, were given 48 cities to live in. The priests among them lived off the tabernacle tithes received from the people. So it's obvious from this situation that Melchizedek's priesthood was not in any way connected to the priesthood of the Levites.

In Mark's Gospel, Chapter 16, it says: "So then, after the Lord (Jesus) had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God."

In Psalm 110, David wrote: The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." And "The LORD has sworn and will not relent, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" Both these verses are speaking about the Lord Jesus' priesthood in heaven. In Hebrews, Chapter 10, it says: "Every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man (that's Jesus Christ), after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool."

The Lord Jesus came from the tribe of Judah, the kingly tribe. He wasn't a priest after the Levite order. If the work of the Levite priests had been perfect, there would have been no need for a different kind of priest to appear, one who is in the priestly order of Melchizedek, and not of Aaron.

Why did Abram give Melchizedek a tithe of all the spoils and then not later take any for himself when offered by the king of Sodom as a rite of battle victory? Abram knew that the victory wasn't due to himself but rather to God. It seemed that Abram's attitude towards being enriched by goods received from pagan idolaters had changed since his trip to Egypt. He didn't want the king of Sodom now boasting that he had made Abram rich.

This test of Abram's faith, courage, generosity and love was passed at this point with flying colours. And this led into the greatest experience with God that Abram had yet received.

Why did Abram feel obligated to chase after Lot even though Lot was a full grown man making his own way in life? Abram must have at least felt it necessary to honour his promise to his dead brother Haran. God always honours His promises too, but people often try to justify why keeping promises are no longer necessary. From this whole experience what did Lot learn? In coming weeks, we'll see Lot's response.

Abram giving tithes to Melchizedek is the first mention in the Old Testament of tithing. Abram's grandson, Jacob, responded with a solemn promise to give God a tenth of all that God gave to him. God also told Moses to tell the Israelites to bring Him an offering, and Moses was to receive this offering on God's behalf from any person whose heart was willing to give.

In Deuteronomy, Chapter 16, it says: "No man should appear before the Lord empty-handed, each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord Your God has blessed you." Should Christians give a tenth of their income to God or is this now only an Old Testament ruling?

God still wants a willing giver, whose heart is not forced to give a certain amount to Him. And what we do with our money shows where our heart is. When we are able to give 10% or more of our income, we practice a principle that encourages our heart not to be tied to our money and possessions. We tell God we love Him more than our money. Many people get tripped up over managing their money. When we are able to release at least 10% of our income back to God, our money isn't our master because we realise that God is in control of our finances. And He owns everything there is and He knows in advance what our needs will be.

While it's true that Christians are no longer under the old law by the grace of God, we must not forget the purpose of God's grace towards us: it's to help us live for God and do the things that He wants us to do. In Matthew, Chapter 23, Jesus talked to the Pharisees, condemning them for tithing even the garden herbs but neglecting the more important issues of justice, mercy and faith among the people. He then went on to tell them that they should in fact tithe, but when doing so, that they shouldn't neglect the more important things of caring for God and people first.

Jesus recognised the importance of keeping the tithe and we should, too. But the amount of money that you give as an offering is ultimately between you and God. But we can be assured that whatever we give, God can abundantly bless for the extension of our faith and His kingdom on earth.

2 Corinthians, Chapter 9, Verse 7, says: "Let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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