



STEP 4: FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

Today, we're going to look at the first war mentioned in the Bible (not the first war ever fought, but certainly the first one mentioned in the Bible). And because of that, it has some important principles to teach us, on a faith level (not to mention a whole lot of hard-to-pronounce names!).

Genesis 14

Most movie-buffs love a big battle-scene. Think *Lord of the Rings*, think *Star Wars*, think *Twilight* (ok, maybe not *Twilight*). And that's what we have here. Having parted company with his nephew Lot, who has chosen to live near the Dead Sea, Abram has relegated himself to living in a tent, in the desert. But even so, God promises to bless him, with the whole land, and billions of descendants.

And then ... he gets a battle-scene!

For 12 years, the kings of Canaan have been paying taxes to the kings of Sumer. In the 13th year, they rebel. In response, Khedorla'omer King of Elam attacks with a massive alliance, makes his way south down the Jordan Valley all the way to the Gulf of Aqaba – attacking cities enroute – then curves round in a clockwise direction, until he arrives at the cities of the plain. He crushes their armies, plunders their cities, and takes some prisoners of war.

Among them, Lot and his family.

Now it's at this point that Abram gets involved. But what are we as readers supposed to do with this? With an event that took place 4000 years ago, involving a bunch of guys with names we can't even pronounce? What has this got to do with Abram's spiritual journey? With our own?

What we have here is more than just a military conflict: it's a spiritual one. It's the first war mentioned in the Bible, and in a way, it's still going on at the end. It's a war for hearts and minds and souls. And it's one we're all involved in. What do I mean by that? These 3 things:

1) It's A Rescue-Mission. When Abram hears what has happened, he assembles his men – 318 trained ninjas – and heads off in pursuit. Now Abram is in Beersheba, in the vicinity of the Negev – the desert area in southern Canaan. Lot and his family have been taken north, to what would later become Dan – close to the border of Lebanon. That's a 5-hour drive! And Abram doesn't have an SUV to jump in. He's using camels!

Why does he do this? Because he cares. Abram knows that Lot is in the mess he's in because he's chosen poorly, but in spite of that, he does what is needed; he gets involved. He shows Lot the grace that God has shown to him.

We live in a world where people are being held captive – by sin, by Satan. For some people, like Lot, it's a result of some bad life-choices. For others, it's simply what they've been born into – they know no different. Whatever the situation, people are prisoners; Jesus wants to set them free; and He wants to use us to do it!

Question is: how far would you be willing to go? For the sake of others? And who are you hoping to rescue? Who are you pursuing?

2) It's A Game-Changer. In spite of being heavily outnumbered, Abram and his men kick Khedorla'omer's butt all the way to Damascus! But imagine if he hadn't. Imagine if he'd just stayed at home, cracked open the ice-cream, and watched some Disney+ instead. What then?

The kings of the east would have established an empire to challenge Abram's descendants some 500 years later.

What we do, right here, right now, has the potential to shape the world. Don't believe me? Read the Gospels! Jesus calls us to a higher purpose than just living out our threescore-years-and-ten, squeezing the most out of today, or fulfilling our biological imperative. He calls us to be salt and light (Matthew 5) – to keep this world from rotting away; to shine like a lamp in the darkness. I.e. how we live our lives – what we do, what we say – has the power to not only impact ourselves and others. It has the power to change the future, too. Every act of obedience could trigger a chain-reaction, a ripple-effect over generations.

Christians in the west often bemoan the fact that our culture isn't as 'Christian' as it used to be. The only way it'll ever become that is if *we* are the Christians *we* are called to be!

3) It's A Declaration Of Faith. This is a fight, not just for people or the future of the world, but for God's honour. The kings in this story want power – in fact, the whole story is about 'who's king round here' (hence the fact the words 'king' or 'kings' are used around 30 times!). When Abram defeats the armies of Khedorla'omer, the message is: there's only room for one! Not the kings of the east, not the kings of Canaan, not even Abram. God is King.

Not man. Not Satan. Only God.

Which is the reason that, when Abram returns triumphant, he does something. Vs17: Abram acknowledges who God is by giving a tenth to Melchizedek, the king of Salem / Jerusalem. But also a priest, of *el-elyon*, God Most High. We don't know anything much about Melchizedek, where he came from or where he goes to (which is the reason the writer to the Hebrews uses him as a picture of the greatest 'King of Righteousness' there is – Jesus the Messiah).

The point, though, is this: in giving to Melchizedek – and refusing the spoils of war – Abram is declaring who this world *really* belongs to. And he's putting *Him* in the centre of it.

Victory Is Ours

So, there's a war on. An ideological war, a psychological war, a philosophical war. But more than anything else, it's a rescue-mission, a game-changer, and a declaration of faith. And we have a part to play. So, how do we do that? By picking up a physical sword and whacking a physical enemy with it? As Abram did? Probably not! So, how then?

Take a look at 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. How?

- **Pray.** Ally yourself with God's plans and purposes. You might not change what God is going to do, but you might change what He does through *you*.
- **Prepare.** Like Abram's 318 servants! Get to know the Scriptures, and the God behind them. And in the process, get to know what you believe – and why.
- **Proclaim.** Both in your words, and your actions. Words are not enough. Actions are not enough. People need to hear what you believe, and see it, too.

A final thought: while we may appear to lose a battle or two – war can be a costly thing – ultimately, the victory is ours. How do we know? Because of Jesus!

But even so, there's a war to be fought.

So, let's get out there, and fight it!