

Genesis 14A (2011)

- As we've moved through the story of Abram, we've been counting two lists
 - We've been watching for the seven times Abram hears from God
 - So with each time we can see Abram's growth in light of the Lord's grace
 - And we've been counting the twelve times Abram's faith is challenged
 - Twelve crises that test Abram and grow him as a man of faith
 - Today in Chapter 14 we see Abram face two more challenges
 - His nephew Lot is still causing trouble for Abram
 - Further consequence for having been brought along against God's instructions
 - Yet God will use this as an opportunity to show grace to Abram
 - This is the only chapter in Abram's story where God is not shown speaking to Abram
 - Yet God is represented in the story, in a man who is both king and priest
- And the story begins with the first military campaign described in the Bible

[Gen. 14:1](#) And it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim,
[Gen. 14:2](#) that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).
[Gen. 14:3](#) All these came as allies to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea).
[Gen. 14:4](#) Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but the thirteenth year they rebelled.

- We're introduced to numerous people and locations
 - The names of these kings are the first names recorded in the Bible in a language other than Hebrew
 - Here we see the effect of the scattering at Babylon

- And further proof that the first language was Hebrew
- A total of nine kings are mentioned, four northern kings invading to conquer five in the south
 - The four in the north come from Shinar, Ellasar, Elam and Goiim
 - Shinar is Mesopotamia, northern and eastern Babylon
 - Ellasar was the leading tribe in southern Babylon
 - Elam is western Babylon
 - And Goiim is a word that simply means nations
 - So interestingly we have the nations, led by the kings of Babylon, invading the Promised land
 - And they attack five kings
 - All five are located in a small area at the southern end of the Dead Sea called the Valley of Siddim
 - Moses calls it the Salt Sea, but we now call it the Dead Sea
- Moses tells us that these five kings in the south had served the kings of the north as vassals
 - Though we have no other details, we can suppose that these southern kings had either been conquered at an early time or had received their kingdoms from the northern kings
 - And that relationship required the southern kings to pay tribute (taxes) to the northern kingdoms
 - But after 12 years, the southern kingdoms tired of that relationship
 - So in the thirteenth year they rebelled

[Gen. 14:5](#) In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim and the Zuzim in Ham and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim,

[Gen. 14:6](#) and the Horites in their Mount Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness.

[Gen. 14:7](#) Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and conquered all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-tamar.

[Gen. 14:8](#) And the king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah and the king of Admah and the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) came out; and they arrayed for battle against them in the valley of Siddim,

[Gen. 14:9](#) against Chedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goiim and Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar – four kings against five.

- So after the year of rebellion, the kings of the north decided to show their power
 - The leader of the group is the king Chedorlaomer, the Big Cheese
 - The invading force comes down the East side of the Jordan river, in present-day Jordan
 - As they proceed south, they attack any city that might come to aid the southern kings
 - This is a very smart strategy, eliminating the defenses and allies of the southern kings
 - Next they defeat the ancient Hamites, called Zuzim, just east of the Jordan
 - Leaving the land unoccupied for Lot's descendants, the Ammonites, to later possess
 - Further south they defeat Emim just east of Jericho
 - The place where Lot's other family, the Moabites, settle
 - Next, they defeat the Horites
 - This becomes the land where Esau later settles to form the Edomites
 - Finally they reach as far south as El Paran, in the Sinai
 - This is the future home of Ishmael, Abram's other son
 - These kings moved southward, protected behind the eastern side of the Trans-Jordan mountain range, to hide their approach while eliminating allies for the southern kings
 - But do you notice that as they go on their rampage, God is using their advance to clear land for future members of Abram's family to occupy the land?

- Here is a perfect example of God turning all things to good for His purposes and for the good of those who love Him
 - Next, they turn at the Gulf Of Aqaba and begin to fight northward toward the heart of Canaan and the rebellious kings south of the Dead Sea
 - First they swing out west into the wilderness of Zin in the southern Negev to defeat the Amalekites and Amorites
- Finally they come upon the kings of the south in the valley of Siddim, approaching from the southwest
 - This is the opposite from where they would have been expected to approach
 - The southern kings are caught off guard and come out into the valley to meet the attacking force
 - They have probably heard about the exploits of the invading force, but without allies, they are forced to face the army with only what forces they have between them

[Gen. 14:10](#) Now the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell into them. But those who survived fled to the hill country.

[Gen. 14:11](#) Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed.

[Gen. 14:12](#) They also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom.

- The location for the battle is the valley at the southern end of the Dead Sea
 - This valley was known then, and today, as a place of natural tar or bitumen (asphalt) pits
 - Similar to La Brea tar pits
 - This is the material used to bind the bricks of the Tower of Babel
 - The battle was a rout and the kings of Sodom and Gommorah fled, but fell into the pits
 - They would have been stuck and slowly sank into the tar
 - The remaining three kings fled into the mountains

- The conquering army did what all winning armies do in this situation
 - They rape, pillage and plunder
 - The goal is to eliminate these city states and make a statement to remaining vassals not to repeat this mistake
 - They remove all the animals, food stores and subjects of the city
 - With the intent to take them back to Babylon
 - And one of those subjects was our man Lot
 - Interestingly, we're told in v.12 that Lot is now living in the city of Sodom
 - Last time we heard from Lot, he was still living in tents outside the city of Lot (13:12)
 - Now he's thrown the tent aside and made a home in this wicked city
- Lot and Abram form a powerful contrast in this story
 - Abram we know as the man of faith, a righteous man who lived by faith
 - He purposely remained outside cities, living in tents
 - Showing his faith in God's promises by forsaking any compromise with the world
 - Lot, his nephew, is a man scripture tells us who was also a man of faith, a man who knew the living God and was counted righteous by faith
 - Peter tells us that Lot was a righteous man living in a city of sin

[2Pet. 2:7](#) and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

[2Pet. 2:8](#) (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds),

- Lot made very different choices than did his uncle Abram
 - He decided to adopt a lifestyle that mirrored the world around him
 - He is led by his eyes

- He is attracted by what the world values
- And yet Scripture tells us that Lot was oppressed by what he saw in Sodom
 - The word oppress in Greek is *kataponeo*, which literally means worn down
 - Lot was worn down by his exposure to the world of Sodom
 - And as he was worn down, he made compromise after compromise
 - We'll study Lot more in Chapter 19
- When Abram disobeyed God's instructions to leave Lot behind, he sets several wheels in motion
 - Disobedience would create consequences for both Abram and Lot
 - But God's promises to Abram are assured because of God's faithfulness, not Abram's
 - So God is also working to use Abram's mistake to God's good purposes
 - And one way God uses Lot in this story is as a picture of future events in the life of Israel and the world
- Lot is a picture of a carnal, disobedient follower of the living God, particularly the Gentile follower of God
 - He is brought into the land because of a promise of God to Abram
 - And his entry is made possible because of the disobedience of God's chosen
 - In Lot's case, he entered the Promised Land because God's chosen Abram disobeyed the word
 - Yet God turned that disobedience into grace for Lot
 - As a picture, Lot represents Gentile believers who are able to share in the promises of Abram because of the disobedience of Israel in rejecting the Messiah

[Rom. 11:11](#) I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

- But now that Lot has been given grace to enter the land, he is living in harmony with the world, rather than living apart from it
 - And he begins to picture the consequences when the people of God do not follow Him fully
- Suddenly, Lot finds himself in captivity headed to Babylon
 - It's no coincidence that the attacking army is made up of forces from Babylon
 - We see a wonderful picture of how the enemy is always attacking, seeking to destroy and carry away God's people
- And Lot is going down with the ship, because he chose to align himself with the people of Sodom rather than remain outside in his tent
 - Just as in a future day when God sends Babylon to remove a rebellious Israel from the land as punishment for their faithlessness
 - Lot serves as that picture for God's purposes in teaching us today
- Now there is a second half to this picture, the story of God's faithfulness to His children despite our faithlessness

[Gen. 14:13](#) Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram.

- A man who escaped from the fighting makes his way to Abram, the Hebrew
 - This is the first time Abram is identified in Scripture as a Hebrew
 - In the OT, this term is used as an ethnic designation, meaning the surrounding people had come to see Abram as someone different from them
 - Abram's lifestyle and testimony caused him to stand apart so much that the people of Canaan had come to see Abram as his own ethnic group within the culture
 - They named him a Hebrew, taken from his ancestor's name Eber

- Can you see the contrast between him and Lot strengthening in this story?
 - Lot isn't known as Lot the Hebrew; he's known as Lot the Sodomite
 - But he's also known as the family member of Abram
- This explains why the refugee would even think to seek out Abram and tell him the story of the defeat of Sodom
 - Lot has probably told people in the city that he was a relative of Abram
 - And the refugee concludes that his only hope of seeing this invading army destroyed was to enlist Abram's involvement
 - And since Abram had no interest in Sodom, the refugee's only hope would be to appeal to his connection to Lot
- This tells us something about Abram and Lot
 - First, it tells us that Abram has truly become rich and mighty in the land
 - God's promise to bless Abram in the land seems clear
 - Secondly, it tells us that Lot tried to maintain his status as a relative of Abram while still trying to be adopted by the world of Sodom
 - Clearly, this refugee had come to know of Lot's connection to Abram, which means that Lot allowed that information be known
 - Lot probably liked the status of being the nephew of the rich, aloof Hebrew
 - We also know Lot was a righteous man tormented by the sin of Sodom, so he probably reminded the Sodomites of Abram to some degree
 - And yet Lot was clearly working to be accepted by the world of Sodom
 - Again, we'll see that even more clearly in Chapter 19

- But for now it's enough for us to remember that we can't have it both ways
 - If we are saved by faith, then we must live by that faith
 - And if we try to live with one foot in the world and one foot in following God, we will eventually do the "splits"
 - We will become a man unstable in all his ways, James says

[Matt. 6:22](#) "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.

[Matt. 6:23](#) "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

[Matt. 6:24](#) "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

- Lot's allowed his eye to pull him away from serving his Master
 - And yet he couldn't walk so far that God left him
 - Leaving him split between two worlds
 - The city of Sodom never accepted Lot as one of their own, because Lot refused to sin in the way that Sodom sinned
 - And yet Lot wasn't successful in walking with God and so he suffered the consequences that come upon the sinful world
 - In my experience, the most miserable person you'll ever meet is a believer who is determined to live a worldly life – like Lot
 - When an unbeliever sins, he or she will experience consequences in one form or another
 - But because they lack a relationship with God and personal knowledge of God's expectations, they can remain largely guilt-free in their pursuit of sin
 - They actually "enjoy" their sin
 - Though they may suffer consequences in one form or another (and certainly in eternity), in the meantime they enjoy it

- But when a believer sins, they experience both the consequences of sin PLUS the guilt of a conscience convicted by the Spirit
 - They can sin but they can't really enjoy it in the same way that the unbelieving world does
 - Even the most hardened believer is still going to experience the convicting work of the Spirit
- This difference is by God's design, of course
 - We are convicted by the Spirit as discipline
 - In fact, that is one of the ways we are marked as different than the world

Heb. 12:8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

- And God brings us conviction so that we might see the error of our ways and conform to the will of God, becoming sanctified over time
- Speaking of conviction, I suspect we may all feel a little conviction as we reflect on the difference between Abram's lifestyle and Lot's lifestyle
 - Abram lived a life of faith that led the peoples of Canaan to call him a Hebrew, a man set apart from the world around him
 - And the world knew Lot was related to Abram
 - But they also knew Lot was a stranger trying to live as one of them
 - How would the world describe us?
 - Do they see us as someone living a life according to a different course, a different path
 - Not putting our faith and trust in what the world values
 - Not walking according to the drumbeat of worldly values, like Abram
 - Would they describe us with titles like Americans, Texans, UT fans, marathon runners, software engineers, teachers, etc.

- Or would they describes us like Abram
- People so different from the world they need a different name...Christians
- Or maybe the world sees us as the world saw Lot
 - They have come to know we are related to the God of Abram
 - We have some relationship with religion, with Christianity
 - And in times of trouble, they might think to benefit from that association
 - But in our day-to-day life, they see us as simply another person trying to make our way in the world, according to the world's rules
 - We seem to want what the world wants, we value what the world values
 - We seek for the same things and get caught up in the same troubles and disappointments
- Who are we? Abram or Lot?