

THE TEST OF VICTORY

Genesis 14:17-24

When God delineates a character, He does not gloss over anything. In this passage He will reveal to us the motives that underlay the actions that led to such blessed and tragic results in the lives of Abraham and Lot. God is just as incisive in His dealings with us. These two men are not a comparison of a sinner and a Christian; rather, they are a comparison between two saints. The New Testament tells us that Lot was a righteous man. He was not righteous in conduct but righteous by imputation on exactly the same basis as his uncle. It is a comparison between a carnal and a spiritual Christian.

From the human standpoint everything was working splendidly for Lot. But, Lot was not a happy man. Neither was God pleased with him. So God set out to recover this righteous man. He permitted Chedorlaomer and three other kings to go down and take Sodom, and God gave them the victory, and they carried away all of the women and goods of Sodom and took Lot as a hostage to prove that they had really captured the city.

Lot was very human. I am confident that he did just what you and I do, namely, when he got into trouble, he promised God all kinds of things if God would only get him out of it. Have you ever done that? Israel did it. The Israelites cried unto the Lord in their distress.

The crowning hour of success is a good test of character. How a man behaves at the moment of victory often affords a supreme revelation of his character and spiritual power. We shall see this in the case of Abraham as we study his interview with the two kings. Gratitude alone would have prompted the king of Sodom to go out to meet Abraham after his return from the slaughter of the kings who had caused such havoc to Sodom and Gomorrah. The meeting was the natural and fitting recognition of the great services rendered. The other king who went out to meet Abraham was Melchizedek, the king of Salem and the priest of the most high God.

Melchizedek seems to have been one of the faithful few who still retained the purity of allegiance to the one true God. He was "a priest of the most high God." The root idea of priesthood is access into God's presence and the representation of man to God.

Notice what Melchizedek did. He brought Abraham two emblems of sacrifice, bread and wine. It was a simple offering that he made to Abraham. We may be sure that it was not by way of refreshment only, for in all the booty that Abraham had retrieved, there was food and drink enough. The bread and wine did not point backward as memorials of sacrifice. They were prophetic, pointing forward to a coming sacrifice.

We are told very distinctly that Melchizedek blessed Abraham and prayed the blessing of God upon him, at the same time blessing God for the deliverance of Abraham. When the word "bless" is used of man, it means to cause to prosper. When it is used of God, it means to praise. Perhaps the idea that links these senses is that of giving joy. Man is made happy by God's blessing, and God is made happy by the praise, reverence and friendship of human hearts.

Notice how the forces of evil exploited Abraham's victory and tried to make it appear that it was their own. Moments of great victory are equally moments of great peril. Every high achievement beckons us on but, if we fail to respond, may bring us to greater disaster. It is clear that Melchizedek anticipated Abraham's peril.

In Melchizedek we have the next personal type of the Lord Jesus Christ after Adam. In Psalm 110:4 we read that God said, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

Melchizedek appears in the Scriptures without antecedents and disappears equally suddenly. No statement is made of his birth, age or the time of his death. In verses 18-20 six points of comparison between type and antitype appear.

1. The name Melchizedek means king of righteousness.
He reigns in righteousness. Isaiah said, "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment" (Isaiah 32:1). He also said, "But with righteousness shall he judge the poor" (Isaiah 11:4). "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins" (Isaiah 11:5). By identifying Himself with us sinners and dying for us on the cross, Christ fulfilled all righteousness. His death made possible the gift of God's righteousness to all His believing people. He now reigns in righteousness over all who acknowledge Him.
2. Melchizedek was the king of Salem.
Salem means peace, and in this sense he is a type of our Saviour. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. At His birth the angels proclaimed peace and good will to men. This peace is based on righteousness. Apart from righteousness, its existence is not possible. At the cross, "righteousness and peace kissed each other." The Saviour's death made possible peace between God and man. It also made possible peace with men. Where Christ reigns, there is righteousness and peace.
3. Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine.
These things were for the sustenance of the weary but victorious warriors. They are appropriate figures of the spiritual food on which the believer in Christ feeds. The bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are pictures and symbols of the body and blood of Christ, which remind us of what He has done for us.
4. Melchizedek was the priest of the most high God.
Jesus Christ is High Priest of an order superior to that of Aaron. He is a priest for ever. As priest He offered Himself without spot to God. As priest He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to intercede for them. As priest He now reigns as King upon His throne.
5. Melchizedek blessed Abraham.
In this respect also he is a type of Christ. It is from the Lord Jesus Christ that all blessings flow. In Him alone and because of Him and through His death and resurrection, His people prosper. They can please God only as Christ dwells by faith in their hearts. Christ is the source of that blessing by which a church grows. Christ is greater than every creature, being seated at the right hand of God and given all authority and power.

Melchizedek recognized God as the Maker, Owner and Sovereign of the world. From the resources of the world, He could bless Abraham materially, and, from the infinite resources of His own eternal Being, He could pour spiritual blessings upon him. So He does with us through the channel of Calvary. If God is the Possessor of heaven and earth, it follows that all that we possess is held from Him. This means that it is entrusted to us for use in His service to the blessing of our fellowmen.
6. Since Melchizedek was a type of Christ, Abraham gave him tithes of all that he possessed. The Christian who is faithful in the matter of tithing is blessed richly for doing so. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."