

A NEW EMERGENCY

Genesis 14:1-16

Here is an impressive list of kings with high-sounding names such as the world loves. In their own eyes, as well as in those of their subjects, these kings were very great, but in the eyes of God they were not. It is very much the same in the world today. We often read in the newspapers about "the great powers." These powers seem to be mighty, but God is the supreme sovereign of them all, disposing their hearts and minds to carry out His will and directing the actions of all their governments. The activities of the four kings mentioned in verse one had a purpose, of which they knew nothing. God intended that the campaign should be a warning and a chastening to Lot, and He used it to bring Abraham in touch with Melchizedek.

A confederacy of Mesopotamian kings made a raid into the Jordan valley and the districts southeast of Palestine. At the Dead Sea they were met by the kings of the five cities of the plain who marshalled their armies and engaged in battle with them. This is the first recorded war in history. The outcome of the conflict was the flight of the five kings and the captivity of their subjects.

Lot, who merely pitched his tent toward Sodom when he separated from Abraham, eventually took up his abode within its polluted walls; and, when it was attacked and overthrown by Chedorlaomer, the greatest conqueror of his age, Lot was among the prisoners of war.

One who had escaped carried the news of Lot's distress to Abraham, who had been enjoying the halcyon days of fellowship with God among the mountains of Judah. It is interesting and impressive to observe the effect of this information upon Abraham. He was not indifferent to his nephew's well-being. There was no bitterness in him. There was no callousness in him which would cause him to say, "Well, this is none of my doing. He must reap what he has sown. It serves the villain right. He made his bed, let him now lie in it. Let him alone. God is righteous. He is avenging me for the wrong which Lot did me."

Abraham might have been sanctimonious in his reaction and said, "Poor Lot, I'm sorry for him. But, of course, there is nothing that I can do. Just one man with a few slaves can do nothing with four mighty kings who have already defeated eleven or more kings and their armies." He might have been even more sanctimonious and said, "Since there is nothing I can do to help, I can pray for him."

Instead of manifesting any such littleness, Abraham decided to rescue Lot. Promptly leaving his happy retreat in Hebron, he proved himself to be a man of thought, skill, courage, bravery and action as well as a worshiper of God.

He who was a lamb where his own interests were concerned became a lion when acting on behalf of others. Abraham did not take the time and trouble to seek the help of any of the kings around him. He took what he had, which was three hundred and eighteen slaves, and immediately set out in pursuit of the victorious army. His spontaneous, whole-hearted and daring decision proved that his heart was perfectly free from any bitterness, that he was willing to risk his life to deliver one who had treated him unfairly, that he still had the same love for Lot which he had always had,

that his love was not passive but positively active and not a love that does no harm but a love that does good. Only God can create such a disposition in the human heart.

By a skilfully arranged and brilliantly executed night attack, Abraham threw the invading force into utter confusion, and we behold him returning from the conflict crowned with success and laden with spoil. He was entirely successful, for he rescued Lot and his household and recovered the goods belonging to the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. This was a small number to defeat such powerful kings, but God is able to save by many or by few.

Notice Abraham's strategy; "He divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left side of Damascus." This is the principle on which to carry on the Gospel war against Satan. All cannot do the same work, nor would it be right for all to be concentrated at the same place. Some preach, others pray and still others give their personal testimony. Some plan and organize, while others fit into the detailed tasks. There are differences of gifts and ministries and activities. All have their part in the great campaign. Prior to the actual battle, secret preparations were necessary. They were prerequisite to success. We must smite with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We must never be slack in following up the enemy. Souls are sometimes retained in Satan's grasp because we do not follow them far enough. We arouse their interest and then let them go. Often much persistence is needed in order to win a soul.