

Genesis in Biblical Perspective: The Gospel of Christ from Genesis – The Battle Belongs to the Lord

Genesis 14:1-16

By [Dr. Harry Reeder III](#)

We are in Genesis 14. We've seen Abram called to Canaan, the Promised Land. We've seen him get hungry. He doesn't believe the Lord and runs down to Egypt. He has lied about his wife to try and save his skin. He gets spanked by Pharaoh and sent right back. We see him getting concerned about Lot and Lot goes off and takes the rich part of the land. Abram stays in what will be the Promised Land as Lot settles in the valley with Sodom and Gomorrah right there in the midst. This is our 24th study in the book of Genesis. So let's look at the Word of God. It's a bit of an extended passage but it's the Word of God, it's the truth. Genesis 14:1-16 says

[1] In the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, [2] these kings made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). [3] And all these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). [4] Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. [5] In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, [6] and the Horites in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the border of the wilderness. [7] Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh) and defeated all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hazazon-tamar. [8] Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out, and they joined battle in the Valley of Siddim [9] with Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings against five. [10] Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country. [11] So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. [12] They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and

went their way. [13] Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner. These were allies of Abram. [14] When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. [15] And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. [16] Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you. Here we are in an interesting passage and you probably noticed that the word king shows up a few times. Actually it shows up 28 times and there are kings all over the place in this passage. I want to set it up by asking you to think this way. I did some reading and when 1899 became 1900 whole new publications came out. Everybody wrote and proclaimed the new millennium, the millennium of peace and life, the golden age. Science was on the rise. Publication and information was on the rise. Everyone was claiming an age of peace, enlightenment and destruction of diseases were right around the corner. It was unbelievable optimism.

Now most of you were here when 1999 became 2000 and do you remember any publications saying that? Do you remember reading anything that said we're going into the 21st century, what a great age, an age of optimism? I don't remember that. I can remember magazines showing body parts blown apart in Iraq. People tortured and killed in Bosnia. I remember journals asking what we were going to do about homicide bombers and the pictures of the mayhem that had been produced in the Middle East being published everywhere. I didn't hear all that optimism and hope but I heard a lot of despair and questioning as we moved to the 21st century.

One reason is because the 19th century that started with all the publications actually became a century of death, a culture of death. There were more wars, more deaths by violence and war in the last century (20th century, the 1900s) than in the entire recorded history leading up to it. The death toll estimated somewhere around 65 million people through all of the wars of the 20th century. As we made the turn to the 21st it seems to be no let up. Of course when you look to the Bible, as you come to the end of time, wars and rumors of wars are not the sign of the second coming but they are one of the birth pangs that will increase and intensify before Christ comes again. How do we view this matter of war? What is the Christian's relationship to it? Why is it here? Actually we're in a text of Scripture that is extremely helpful to us but first I'd like to draw something out here. In our past studies we have attempted to bring out a basic truth in each text that would transform our mind. It is a world and life view that we need to pack

away in our mind as we look at the issues of the age. The one I want to give you now is that actually the world is a war zone. Now will I work for peace? Yes. Do I pray for peace? Yes, but it is a war zone.

Now I live in a culture that has advertisements that has communication, presentation and that is trying to convince me that the world is a playground, but it's not. It's a battleground. The world is a battleground and I keep finding not only casualties, but Christians casualties. Churches are dying. Christians are faltering and wounded. They are Christian casualties in this war. I don't want to use one part of the Lord's Day for the other part of the Lord's Day in preaching except to tell you that my life has been revolutionized by three or four things in this last year but one thing has to do with my preparation for my series on Spiritual Warfare. It has been challenged and I want to get to that with you but first of all I want you to look at this text with me to look at the war that is in this text.

As I said 28 times the word king is mentioned in this text and this is the first time in the Bible it makes mention of and records a war. That's not because I don't believe there were wars that had occurred up until this time but in God's inspired recording of this Bible which is the Word of truth, this is the first time a war is recorded. It is an international war. There are four kings that make up a confederacy of the East. There is Chedorlaomer king of Elam and you can replace Elam with Iran. Amraphel is the king of Shinar and you can replace Shinar with Babylon and you can replace Babylon with Iraq. King Amraphel is so famous they are actually dating time in the days of Amraphel. These are large kingdoms of the East.

What about the two other nations? Both of them are nations that make up today what we call Turkey. So here are four large powerful nations. You didn't get any fiercer than the Goyim which refers to the Hittites. These were fierce people. They had conquered the Middle East. In particular they had conquered an area called the Valley of Siddim which today has been laid waste because of the judgment of God, in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah but in that day before the judgment fell it was a lush valley that had in it a dead sea. This lush valley had what we call city states, not big nations, which had their own little kings. There are five of them listed for you in this text which includes Sodom and Gomorrah. They had been under the oppressive heel of the tyranny of this confederacy led by Chedorlaomer and had been paying tribute for twelve years. On the thirteenth year these five city kingdoms and their kings got together. It's interesting to note that the names of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah (Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah) were not foreign names but nicknames. Bera means evil and Birsha means wicked. So they were probably nicknames like Ivan the Terrible – King Wicked and King Evil because Sodom and Gomorrah were full of evil. They had been put under the heel of oppression of these large four nations that had held them under the leadership of Chedorlaomer. After twelve years they had had enough and began to rebel.

In the thirteenth year Chedorlaomer put together these armies from these four nations, marched in and defeated them and said that wasn't enough. So in the fourteenth year he went on a one year rampage. There is a wonderful study on this done by an archeologist by the name of Donald Gulteck where he followed every step of this one year rampage and every single city that is mentioned bore the brunt of mayhem. You could see in the archeological ruins what had happened. Finally he comes back and now they bring havoc on the five city kingdoms that had risen up against them. They absolutely destroy them. As was the case in that day, they enslaved all women and children and whatever was left they took all the possessions. A man survived in God's providence. He came back and informed Abram. In the text Abram is referred to as Abram the Hebrew. That is the first time he is referred to that way. The writer is drawing Abram out as a distinction. There are all these people related to their kingdoms but then there is Abram the Hebrew who belongs in the Kingdom of God. The Hebrew is the child of God, the citizen of God's Kingdom. He receives this information and immediately reaches out in an alliance with probably three chieftains of clans (big families) in the area. Abram calls forth his own existing little army.

This is an interesting phrase in the text that is translated 'trained servants' in your Bible. The word is 'chaniyk' and it's the only time it's used in the entire Bible so you have to go outside the Bible to find out what it means. It means a trained retinue or a personal body guard (army). Abram had supported and developed 318 (very precisely stated) men who were trained by him and ready for situations like this. He takes his 318 men and whatever comes with this alliance and they go and find Chedorlaomer and his large army. Somehow this piddly force divides up a tax and God blesses it. How do I know this?

Genesis 14:19-20 says [19] *And he (Melchizedek) blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; [20] and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*

The Lord gave Abram the victory, even with this little army he had put together. He wins the victory and scoops up all of the possessions that were left, brings them back and restores them. What else did he do? He rescued his nephew but notice twice in the text it refers to Lot as Abram's brother, even though he was the son of Abram's brother. So why would the text refer to Lot as Abram's brother?

There are some reasons why but I want to walk you through what I think are five very important things we can see in this text. Why is the Lord giving us this information, this first recorded war? The first thing is to get us with the right perspective. Christian, you are continually in a spiritual war. Spiritual warfare is a constant that the Christian is to be involved in. Periodically the spiritual warfare

that is a constant will erupt into violence and physical warfare among peoples and nations. That is the way to look at it. Spiritual warfare is a constant. This world is a war zone.

Spiritual warfare has already been going on and it started all the way back in Genesis 3. When Adam and Eve sinned God said "I will put enmity between you and the serpent." Spiritual warfare is a constant and periodically it will erupt into physical warfare. As a Christian I am involved everyday in spiritual warfare. Most of us think spiritual warfare is bringing somebody in with vestments on waving crosses around and run demons out or we'll bring someone in that very loudly goes into incantations. We think incantations or icons are the way you do spiritual warfare. That's not what the Bible teaches. Most of us think of spiritual warfare as an exotic subset of the Christian life that few people get involved in. I do believe in demon possession and I do believe the supernatural can manifest itself in frightening ways but that's not what you and I are to identify as spiritual warfare. That is something that happens out of the context of spiritual warfare. Spiritual warfare is another way to talk about the Christian life. We are at war. You have an enemy of your soul, your family and children. We are in this world and not in a playground but a battleground. The sanctity of life is a battleground. It's a war. You don't that by any means people are promoting abortion out of the act of concern for some philosophical issue of privacy, rights and choice, do you? It is an assault upon women, another assault upon the family and it is an industry of sin. The reason it can't get pulled out is because it is rooted in the greed of this world. It is an industry of sin. You don't think pornography is a matter of just getting the right restraints out there, do you? I'm all for restraints but pornography is a Satanic assault upon men and their wives and it is an industry rooted financially.

[12] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. [13] Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. (Ephesians 6:12-13 ESV)

You are at war. Periodically that spiritual warfare will erupt into a physical warfare. Now, the Christian who is engaged everyday in the spiritual warfare has to make a decision as to whether they will be engaged in this eruption and if so, where? That's always a tough decision.

I believe this text and many other texts rules out passivism. Not only did Abram get involved in this war but Abram already had a little army ready in case of war. Clearly Abram was not a passivist. As Abram gets involved in the war, how do we make these choices? If spiritual warfare is a constant that erupts periodically in a war, how do I know what war is just and I like Abram need to enter into it? I

don't think this text gives you all the information but let me give you four things the text does give you. The first thing is you don't enter into war out of personal anger and bitterness. That's called vigilantism and vengeance. You have to be under God ordained authority. That's why it takes time to remind you that Abram went to war as a Hebrew because he was under the Kingdom of God. Secondly, a just war must have a righteous cause. That righteous cause was the rescue of the oppressed in general and his kinsmen Lot in particular. Thirdly, a just war must be defensive in purpose. It is not imperialistic. A just war is always defending the oppressed, the weak, those who are put upon, your family, your people, etc. It may have offensive strategy but it is defensive in nature. Fourthly, a just war always has a limited existence to accomplish a defined objective. As soon as Abram conquered Chedorlaomer and rescued Lot and the oppressed, he took him back and the war is over. He didn't take it a step further and decide to go conquer Shinar or Elim for he wasn't imperialistic, it was defined. It had a very specific purpose and once it was accomplished it was over. He went home and restored everyone back to where they were supposed to be.

As Christians, when we're in spiritual warfare or when we have to make a choice to participate in the eruption of a physical warfare, sometimes we find ourselves in unusual alliances as Abram did. Sometimes we find ourselves defending unusual situations such as assisting the lives of those who made up Sodom and Gomorrah. There have been many times in the sanctity of life issue that I have found myself on a sidewalk standing with somebody who is with me on the issue of the sanctity of life, but not with me in terms of the glory of the Triune God who saves people from their sins by grace. There will be times we find ourselves in alliances such as that in the moments of warfare. So the first thing I pointed out was that there will be warfare and when the warfare erupts into physical warfare you have to make a decision as to your participation as a believer, as Abram the Hebrew had to do.

Here is a second thing from the text. There will be casualties in warfare and Christians, many times, will be casualties. A war had hit the Valley of Siddim. Casualty was not only Sodom and Gomorrah, their kings, their people but also Lot, the believer. Let me confess to you that when I read about the life of Lot I would tend to question whether Lot was a believer but then I would see what the book of Peter says in II Peter 2:7, [7] *...he rescued **righteous** Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked.* So there is no doubt in my mind that Lot is a believer. If there was such a thing as barely saved then I think Lot was barely saved but somehow the Bible identifies him with the Kingdom of God and in the text here in Genesis it says Lot was one of

Abram's brethren, as a Hebrew. So I see him that way and he is a casualty. Why is Lot a casualty? Why do Christians sometimes become casualties in

spiritual warfare? It is because we make bad choices. One reason we're casualties is

we have an enemy within us that we have to deal with daily but another reason is

because we make bad choices. That's exactly what Lot has done. Genesis 14:12 says *[12] They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.* How did Lot get in Sodom? What is he doing there? Let's look at Genesis 13. Abram and Lot divide the land and Lot takes the land that has the valley. The valley is where Sodom and Gomorrah are and what does Lot do?

Genesis 13:12 says *[12] Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom.* One translation says that Lot pitched his tent near Sodom. How did he get in Sodom? One day he decided to pitch his tent near Sodom. He didn't flee temptation and wickedness but he went up against it. He ended up in it and when the hand of warfare came through the city it swept him up as well. Where are we and what choices are we making in life? There are careless decisions and thoughtful decisions. Fathers, where are you pitching the tent of your children? What is it near? Where do you pitch the tent of your family? College student, where have you pitched your tent when the call of peer pressure comes? Have you pitched in the tent of the Lord or near Sodom? I'll never go in it but before long you're drawn into it. The Bible never tells you to resist temptation. It always says to flee it.

The third thing from the text is common grace. As Abram reached out to rescue his brother Lot, his kinsmen, his nephew and what was there, who benefited? Sodom and its inhabitants is who benefited. Whenever God's people are faithful to serve the Lord they become His instruments to overflow God's goodness into a society even one wicked like Sodom. When God's people are faithful His presence becomes a blessing in restraining the death spiral of a culture. We live in a culture of death. Forget the wars. Forget the casualties. All of those wars and casualties in the last century forget them. 48 million children have been killed. Do you think the culture of death stops there in the womb?

Now the culture of death has moved to the end of life. It is your duty to die. We just passed a law approved by our Supreme Court that now allows doctors to prescribe not medicine for healing but medicine for death. I am not a prophet or a son of a prophet I only have to look to Europe. This move if it becomes nationwide and it is not changed that allows doctors to be used to prescribe medicine for death will not long, perhaps in just a few years be used eventually for doctors to prescribe death. I'm not talking about medicine for death but death itself. We live in a culture of death that always provides exceptional situations to rationalize death instead of life. But if believers are faithful in love and truth then

as God blesses them the spillover of common grace is into society as well, just as Sodom benefitted from Abram's movement to be faithful to his kinsmen.

Here is the fourth thing. Don't miss the transforming power of God's grace. Who marches out, takes on four big nations and their kings with a couple of allies? Abram the Hebrew does this. This is movie stuff. This is Braveheart. Forget William the Wallace. Here is Abram marching out as the great warrior with only 318 men, a few piddly allies taking hold of these tyrants and freeing his brother and all of these who have been captured. That's a story for a movie right there. That's grace. That is the same man who a few verses ago was willing to sacrifice his wife to save his own skin. That is the same man who was willing to lie and put his own wife's life on the line as long as he could save his life. What changed that man? It was God's grace and mercy. God delights in taking us in our weakness and showing His strength. God delights in taking our vice and making it into virtue. God delights in metamorphous transformation. He took Abram the coward to Abram the brave heart.

The fifth thing from the text is the inevitable, undeniable call of God upon us to love one another. Let us love one another. Let us reach out in ministry. Let me put myself in Abram's shoes for a moment. Lot got captured. Why? He is in Sodom. Why? He pitched his tent near Sodom. Okay, Lot has made some dumb choices. He is getting what he deserves. Okay God, get him. No, even when our brothers and sisters make bad choices and falter, like we do, the love of the brethren calls us to risk everything to reach them. We reach one another. We reach out through a crisis pregnancy center, Lifeline, the statesmanship of Godly people who will bring the sanctity of life. We reach out in evangelism explosion to gather one another and rescue the lost to bring to Jesus Christ.

The Bible calls us in the love of the brethren to risk all to reach out and watch what God does as He takes people at their point of dereliction and transforms them into great statements and trophies of grace. Is this not what the Bible says in Galatians 6? Galatians 6:1 says *[1] Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.* The love of the brethren causes us to risk all, to liberate one another in the hand of God's power.

When I was a kid I loved to play baseball. I would play baseball at Veteran's Park that was three miles away from my house so every afternoon I would go play baseball. One day we were playing our sand lot way where you choose up but you don't have enough so we didn't have a catcher. I was 10 years old and I was pitching that day so the pitcher has to cover home plate if you don't have a catcher. I pitched and the guy hit one in the outfield. There was a runner at second and he was coming around to score. I ran from the pitcher's mound to the plate and the throw was a little to the side so I reached out for it, grabbed it, lost my balance and as I was falling down I dropped the ball and my glove. I broke

my fall with my arm and broke it and literally my arm was in an L shape. I will never forget that sight as long as I live. I looked at it and with great powers of observation I said "I broke my arm." I didn't even ask who scored or how they would finish the game I just started walking that three miles back home saying "Mother" all the way. I realized that if I turned my arm a certain way it didn't look like it was broken. So I turned my arm that way and looked at it all the way home hoping that would heal it somehow. When I got home my mother saw the size of my eyes, how the blood had left my head and everything else and she knew I was moments away from absolute shock. So my mom being a good mom just lied to me. She said "I think it's just a sprain, you're going to be okay." They took me to the emergency room and unfortunately we didn't have an orthopedic doctor and they picked one out of the phone book who happened to be on the golf course when they called him. He did not like being called off the golf course but he did. He met us at the emergency room, looked at my arm and said "This boy's arm is broken and it's a bad break. My recommendation is that we put him to sleep."

Our Scots Irish blood runs deep because my daddy looked at the doctor after he said that and said "Will it cost more?" The doctor said "It costs more to put him to sleep than to give him a shot, and I'll have to keep him over night so you'll have to pay for the room." My daddy said "Is there another way?" The doctor said "Yes, there is another way. I can give him two shots but it will still hurt him a lot but you won't have to stay overnight and yes Mr. Reeder it does cost less." My dad said, "Then do it." My dad is a salesman. After that conversation he came over to the bed and said "Son, we're going to do a shot because if they give you anesthesia the pain will last through tomorrow and it will be worse tomorrow than it is today so let's just go ahead and get it over with right now." He didn't say it would cost him less but that was his explanation.

So I said "Okay dad that's fine." So Dr. Wrenn got up on the bed, put his knee on my shoulder, grabbed the arm, pulled it up, jiggled it a few times and then pop, snapped it. I heard that and felt it and then heard those dreaded words, "I didn't quite get it." Then we did it again. Now let me tell you why I'm telling you all this. It is what he said to me next that I want you to know. He said "Son, I can't tell you that you're not going to break another bone and I can't even tell you that you won't break this arm again but I will tell you this. If you break this arm I'll tell you where you won't break it. When this thing heals it will be stronger than any place else."

That is the very word that is used in Galatians 6 when it says "*you who are spiritual should **restore** (set straight) him in a spirit of gentleness.*" Set it straight. Restore them. When we reach out to risk all to love one another and God's grace works through us not only are our brothers rescued but we set it straight. Where there was weakness will now be the strength of the Lord. So my takeaways are simple. First, let's make right choices so we're like Abram who was positioned to

help instead of like Lot who was in need of the rescue. Don't pitch your tent near Sodom. Do like Abram and build an altar and worship the Lord.

Secondly, be ready to risk all to reach each other. Be ready to lay it all on the line to reach one another. I'll go into the battle for my brother, for his wife, for her husband, for their children, for the testimony of Christ. My choices in life do not save me but my choices can set me in a position for a witness for Christ and to reach others. Help me make the right choices and risk all.

Finally, this is the exciting thing. I want to show you Jesus in this. When I looked at this text I kept saying "Why did he keep calling his nephew brother?" Here's why. The text calls Lot the brother because the text is presenting you Abraham, to look through Abraham and come and see Jesus. Hebrews 2 says that Jesus left everything to come and sing the praise of God's salvation among His brothers – us. Jesus is the greater Abram. Jesus Christ left His glory to come here to do battle and defeat our enemies. He rescued us to call us brothers and take us to glory. I want to be like Abram but in reality I know I'm Lot, but my Savior has called me 'brother' and has come to the battle and won the victory. He has saved my soul. The battle is the Lord's and the victory is mine. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the privilege to look at this text in our worship time. O God we do crown You with glory and honor through Jesus Christ, our Braveheart, our Victorious Warrior who has come to save us. Friend, if you are in these moments of making choices in your life for you and your family, make not careless choices but ask God by grace to make the right choices that you'll not be casualties but that you will be instruments to reach and love others for Christ. Look beyond Abram and see Jesus who has left all to save all of His brothers. Thank God for His grace for He has called you 'brother.' Jesus, receive glory and honor now and forever more, Amen.

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