

• *A new crisis for Abram*

Abram has shown much faith ¹, but alongside his faith there have been anxieties over his safety ² and tussles in his relationship with Lot ³. But God has been faithful and His promises have been renewed and clarified ⁴. Now there comes a new crisis for Abram to handle.

¹ 12:1–9
² 12:10–20
³ 13:1–13
⁴ 13:14–18

Four kings against five

In the days of Abram, round about 2000 BC, there came an occasion when four kings from Mesopotamia ¹ declared war on five kings ² who had territories at the southern end of the Dead Sea. These five city-states had been ruled by an Eastern king, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, for twelve years. Then they made an alliance ³ and in the thirteenth year they rebelled against Chedorlaomer ⁴. As a result war broke out; four kings against five.

¹ mentioned in 14:1
² mentioned in 14:2
³ 14:3
⁴ 14:4

• *Warfare in the area of Sodom close to Lot*

The Eastern kings, led by Chedorlaomer invaded Canaan and conquered four tribes on the eastern side of the Dead Sea ¹, continuing as far south as El-Paran. Then they turned towards the northwest conquering two further kingdoms in that southern area ². At this point they were approaching the south of the Dead Sea and the five Canaanite kings went out to do battle; four kings against five ³. Lot was now living in the area of Sodom, so the warfare was being conducted in an area close to where he was living.

¹ 14:6
² 14:7
³ 14:8–9

• *Bitumen pits*

However the region south of the Dead Sea was full of bitumen pits, and when the battle went against the Canaanites and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled with their troops, many men fell into these bitumen pits. ('They' in verse 10 seems to refer to the soldiers rather than the kings.) Others fled to the hills ¹.

¹ 14:11

• *Lot captured*

Now Lot and Abram come into the story. The goods of the kings were captured, and so was Lot ¹.

¹ 14:11

1. Lot's unspirituality proves unprofitable

1. Lot's unspirituality proves unprofitable ¹. We remember that when there had been a dispute over crowded land, Lot had been allowed to take the Jordan valley as his inheritance, leaving Abram with the higher territory that was more westerly. He himself has moved close to Sodom. It seemed to be a comfortable option that Lot had chosen, but now this is the very area south of the Dead Sea that had been invaded.

¹ 14:12

• *Learning about security*

There are two ways of discovering that there is very little security in this world outside of God. There is the easy way and the hard way. The easy way is to believe God! God constantly warns us there is no security in earthly treasures. They can be lost overnight. War may smash our expectations. Everything deteriorates; 'moth and rust' can destroy. Thieves can break in and steal ¹. And if our treasures are not taken from us, we might be taken from our treasures, as the 'rich fool' of Luke 12:13–21 discovered.

¹ Matthew 6:19

• *The easy way – believing God*

• *The hard way – painful experience*

If we believe God, we will be able to handle earthly treasures well, but if we will not learn the easy way there is a hard way, and that is to discover the insecurity of earthly treasures by bitter experience. Lot had to learn the hard way.

2. The challenge to Abram's peace

2. The event is a challenge to Abram's peace ¹. He was living near Hebron in a place where there were many 'terebinths'. 'Terebinths' were trees that did not grow very high but their branches spread out and gave plenty of shade. Abram was living in a temporary home at a place called 'the Terebinths of Mamre'. He is in a friendly relationship with Mamre, Eschol and Aner, three nearby clan-leaders.

¹ 14:13

• *No leisurely life*

But if Abram ever imagined he was going to be left to live a leisurely life in

for Abraham!

• No easy life for the believer!

3. The challenge to Abram's generosity

• When hurt – no revenge

• Instead God will act

the countryside under the shade of the trees, he soon found that it was not to be! A messenger arrives; Lot has been taken prisoner.

There is no permanent easy peace for the believer. It is true that there is God's peace, but God's peace is not an easy life. It is rather an assurance of being reconciled to Him and having Him as ally and friend in every trouble. In a worldly sense God brings 'not peace but a sword'. We may have peace within, peace with God, but there is no promise of soft and easy living.

3. **The event is a challenge to Abram's generosity** ¹. What did Abram feel, we wonder, when the news first came to him about Lot? It would be easy to say 'It serves him right!'. Yet Abram felt obliged to help ². If he felt any resentment against Lot he does not let it trouble him for long. He acts with speed, and takes time, effort and energy, and uses all his resources to rescue his nephew Lot ³. He is showing generosity to a brother-believer who has badly treated him!

Paul tells us that if it is possible we must live at peace with everyone. Sometimes it is not possible. Abram was not finding his nearby chiefs and rulers to be very peaceable. But, says Paul, we are not to take revenge. In many situations where we are ill-treated we are to do nothing, and God will act. When Lot was dealing rather unfairly with Abram, Abram did nothing. Lot treated him badly, but Abram simply let him have his way. 'Leave room for the wrath of God', says Paul. Often when we are ill-treated we are tempted to act vengefully. Abram did nothing. Soon God acted and Lot learnt that there was no security in greed.



Abram was not being overcome by Lot's evil ways; he was overcoming evil with good. We have to get to the point where we are actually obeying Romans 12:17–21. It is easy to admire the idea of overcoming evil with good. Abram is not simply admiring the idea; it is the way he has learned to live.

See Map Appendix 1

¹ 14:13

² 14:13

³ 14:14–16

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible</i> (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>		
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