

98-10-11a

Let's begin our worship this morning with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for the privilege of gathering together and worshiping. We thank you for the standing that we have before you because of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

We thank you that you have provided for us in this life and given us wonderful hope for the next. And we pray that as we study your word together this morning, God the Holy Spirit will give us understanding and enable us to not only remember these things but to see the way that they apply in our daily decisions, our daily thinking, and ultimately in how we live our lives before you. We pray for those who are not with us this morning that you will be with them and preserve them and bring them through the various tasks and requirements that they have.

We pray that as we worship together this morning that our fellowship will be beneficial and a blessing to each one here. We pray that all things will be done decently and in a way that glorifies our Savior, Jesus Christ. We ask these things in his name.

Amen. I turn with you this morning for our scripture reading to the beginning of the third book of Psalms, which is Psalm 73. As I mentioned a week or two ago, the Psalms as the Hebrew hymnal is a book actually divided into five parts.

It's not quite as clear in the English as it is in the Hebrew scriptures, which of course are grouped quite differently from ours. I need to go back and remind myself again exactly how that happened. You would think that our Old Testament would reflect the order and organization of the Hebrew scriptures, but it does not at all.

Once you get past the first five books, the order in the Hebrew Bible is altogether different than ours. The Hebrew scriptures are organized into three categories, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. You find Psalms in the third section of the Hebrew Bible.

Then within the book of Psalms, there are five smaller books. Psalm 73 is the first song in the third book of Psalms. The author is Asaph.

The subject of this song is prevailing in the face of testing, prevailing in times when you look around and see that others seem to be prospering. In our study in Genesis, as we finish chapter 13 and begin chapter 14 this morning, we've seen Abram and Lot in the land of promise, looking around because the Canaanites and the Perizzites are living in the land. When Abram gives Lot the choice of where to live, Lot looks and sees the great fertile plain of the Jordan there.

The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are quite prosperous. He looks at that and he thinks, well, they're prospering. That's a place where I can prosper too.

This psalm has something to say because we've seen that the basis for parting between

Abram and Lot is their difference in thinking. We see the same tension here in Psalm 73 this morning. Asaph says in the words to this song, Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart.

But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no pangs in their death, but their strength is firm.

This, of course, he has labeled this as his faulty thinking when he was envious. This is what he thought he saw when he looked at the boastful and wicked. Looks like they're able to comfort themselves all the way up to the point of death.

They can buy the best doctors. They can ensure through their wealth the best environment for themselves. Their strength is firm.

They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men. Therefore, pride serves as their necklace. Violence covers them like a garment.

Their eyes bulge with abundance. They have more than the heart could wish. They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression.

They speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens and their tongue walks through the earth. Therefore, his people return here and waters of a full cup are drained by them.

And they say, how does God know? And is their knowledge in the most high? They're saying, you know, you're sitting there poor and you have your God. I'm sitting here rich with my wealth. Just compare status.

What is this faith in God doing for you? Because they're looking at the current circumstance. They deny the existence or the power of God. Verse 12, Behold, these are the ungodly who are always at ease.

They increase in riches. Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued and chastened every morning.

Asaph has already labeled this as his faulty thinking. He looked around at others that seemed to be doing better. Well, I pursued the cleansing of the heart instead of the swelling of the wallet.

And it's been a waste of time because these people are doing well and I'm afflicted. Verse 15, If I had said, I will speak thus, meaning I'm going to... These thoughts are running through his mind. If he decides to go ahead and starts talking this way, telling others, you know, I followed this way of the cleansing of the heart and it's a waste of time.

If I had said, I will speak thus, behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of your children. Of course, he's talking to the Lord here. When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me until... And you have a great turning point in verse 17.

What is the antidote or the remedy when our thinking runs down a false track? Because all of these things may appear to be true in the short-term view. How do we restore objectivity? How do we restore an objective, correct view? Well, verse 17. This was confusing.

It was difficult to understand. It was painful until I went into the sanctuary of God. Then I understood their end.

Then I lifted up my gaze and saw something beyond the immediate. Taking a snapshot at the moment, it appears that they're prosperous and I'm afflicted. But when I went to the sanctuary of God, my standpoint, my viewpoint is elevated and I can see past the immediate to what the ultimate end is.

Surely you set them in slippery places. You cast them down to destruction. Oh, how they are brought to desolation as in a moment.

They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakes, so, Lord, when you awake, you shall despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved and I was vexed in my mind.

I was so foolish and ignorant. I was like a beast before you. You know, one of the characteristics of an animal is that they don't plan ahead.

They don't. When you have a little puppy and it's just all around your ankles and following you everywhere you go, if you walk out the door, maybe you're just taking out the trash and you're going to be back in a minute. But the puppy thinks you're going and never coming back.

And you scratch on the door and whine and bark and want to come with you and so forth. They don't have any real vision of the future. They don't have patience.

They don't have foresight. This is what Asaph says. When I was thinking this way, I was grieved.

I was vexed. I was foolish and ignorant. I was like a beast before you.

I was just reacting to the viewpoint of the moment. Nevertheless, I am continually with you. You hold me by my right hand.

These are the thoughts that are now coming to him since he's gone to the sanctuary. You will guide me with your counsel and afterward receive me to glory. You'll notice that now he's looking at the end of the wicked and he's looking at the end of the righteous.

He says, it may look this way now, but there's something beyond. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart fail.

But God is the strength of my heart and my portion, my allotment or my inheritance forever. For indeed, those who are far from you shall perish. You have destroyed all those who desert you for harlotry.

But it is good for me to draw near to God. I have put my trust in the Lord God so that I may declare all your works. This is exactly the type of thinking, short-term versus long-term, just looking at the visible and the temporary, that separates Lot from Abram in Genesis chapter 12.

And if we return there now, we resume our study of this important section of Scripture because Abram and Lot are in the land. Abram and Lot are in the land. What exactly does the land represent to us? I'll give you just a real brief summary of the land.

The land is the place of four things. And we're drawing this observation or this definition of the land from what we've seen here in the last few chapters of Genesis. Ever since Abram left Ur and went up to Haran and then came down to the land of promise, the land has now become a big factor in the story.

Abram comes to the land and he's blessed. He worships God. When he leaves the land, bad things happen.

And he's rebuked and corrected and instructed when he leaves the land. And he returns to the land. We saw that in chapter 12.

The land, therefore, we have seen is the place of four things. The land is the place of fellowship. God had spoken to Abram when he was in Ur.

But now God appears to Abram. Abram builds an altar to the Lord. There's no record of any altars in Ur or in Haran or down in Egypt.

It's when Abram is in the land that he builds an altar and has mutual communication and fellowship with God. So the land is the place of fellowship. Secondly, we've seen that the land is the place of blessing.

God says, get thee up out of thy kindred and household and so forth and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation. Through you, all the peoples of the earth shall be blessed and so forth.

So when Abram obeys and comes to the land, this is the basis of blessing. Obedience and faith in God's promise are the basis of blessing. And the land is the place where those things are fulfilled.

So the land is the place of fellowship. The land is the place of blessing. The land is also the place of testing.

Because once Abram arrives in the land, he discovers that it's not a wonderful garden paradise where he just plucks the fruit off the trees and lives like Adam and Eve. The land is a place of testing. The Canaanites are in the land.

The Perizzites are in the land. Famine happens in the land. And Abram's commitment is tested.

His faith is put to the test. When you run out of water and run out of pasturage, what are you going to do? The first time that happened, Abram bugged out, as we used to say in the Marine Corps. When something gets too hot, when you come under so much fire that you can't, you know, we don't have any words beginning with R in the Marine Corps vocabulary.

I think, you know, in other contexts, you might find words like retreat and evacuate and so forth. But Marines just bug out or advance in another direction. So, but Abram, what are you going to do? The land is a place of testing.

It's not all over once you get to the land. We have so many songs that talk about once I cross the chilly Jordan and get into the land, then everybody will be happy over there. Well, in reality, dwelling in the kingdom of God, dwelling in the land of promise is a new stage of growth.

It's the place where you can really start to develop relationship with God. So the land is a place of fellowship, a place of blessing. It's a place of testing.

And fourthly, the land is a place of hope. We saw last time in the distinction between Abram and Lot, Lot has got that short-term thinking. I want to go someplace where there's lots of green grass.

I want to go someplace where you've got people and the opportunity for trade. Abram, when he's functioning properly in the land, he says, I can go anywhere. I can go to the desert areas.

I can go, doesn't matter if there's a famine or not. God will sustain me because I've got the promise. So he's got that long-term perspective.

He's not going to look at the people in Sodom and Gomorrah and say, I think I've made the wrong choice being an itinerant and a wanderer in the land. I ought to settle down in the plains of the Jordan like the Sodomites did, and then I'll be prosperous. So the land is a place of hope.

It's the place of looking ahead and not falling apart in the short term because you can

see what's in the long term. So blessing, fellowship, testing, hope. And one final observation.

The land is entered by faith. Dwelling in the land is sustained by faith. So the land is the place of faith.

It's entered by faith. You stay there by faith. When Abram loses his faith, he leaves the land.

Lot doesn't develop any faith and he leaves the land. So this is now the environment in which our story is taking place. And what we're going to see as we go into chapter 14, that there is a lot more to the land than just getting up out of your land of Ur and coming to the land and then everybody's happy.

One of the things that signals this to us is the use of the word dwell. This is yashav in Hebrew, Y-A-S-H-A-B or V. This word occurs in chapter 12, for example, in verse 6. It occurs in verse 7. This is in chapter 13, rather, the chapter we just studied. Lot and Abram could not dwell together in verse 6 because their possessions were so great.

In verse 7, the Canaanites and Perizzites dwell in the land. You find it again in verse 12. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan.

Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain. You find it again in verse 18. Abram moved his tent and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord.

So dwelling in the land, this is a pretty prominent theme in this section. Before we leave chapter 13, another observation I'd like to bring to your attention is there's a parallelism between Abram and Lot that we've not yet talked about. Look at chapter 13, verse 9. You have the word separate.

Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. Then down in verse 14, the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, lift up your eyes now and look from the place where you are. You have the idea of look around.

In verse 10, Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan. God tells Abram in verse 14, lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are. The same word is used for see in verse 10 and verse 14.

The same phrase, all the land or all the plain, is used in verse 10 and 11 and in verse 15. Abram and Lot both are involved in separation. Separate, you've got two people going their separate ways.

What happens as a result of the separation? Lot lifts up his eyes and looks and sees the plain of the Jordan. Abram lifts up his eyes, looks and sees northward, southward,

eastward and westward all the land which you see I will give you and your descendants forever. As a result, they both camp.

In verse 12, Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom. His residence is in Sodom. Abram, in verse 18, moved his tent and went and dwelt by the Oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord.

As a result of the priorities and the viewpoint that these two men have, they engage in similar actions. They lift up their eyes. They look.

They separate. They go. They dwell.

But the outcomes are completely different, even though they're performing the same action, because they have a different priority. They have a different viewpoint of life. So that's worth pointing out.

And this verse 14 and 15 are also interesting, 14, 15 and 16, because when God appears to Abram and speaks to him here, we have another one of the famous chiasmic structures that we have seen so often here in Genesis, where you have a structure like an X. You have the outermost things, or the outer brackets, corresponding to each other. Then you have a set of inner brackets that correspond to each other. Then inside that you have another set of brackets that correspond to each other.

So if you look in verse 15, God says, All the land which you see I will give to you and your descendants forever. And you can label that with an A. And if you go down to verse 17, God says once again, I give it to you. So God brackets the outside bracket.

God says, I give this to you. I give this to you. Within that, you have a second bracket.

Your descendants in verse 15. And at the end of verse 16, you have your descendants mentioned again. And right in the center of that bracket, you have the repetition of the phrase, dust of the earth.

And you recall, why is this important? We could just say, well, this is an interesting structure and move on. But God doesn't repeat himself without a purpose. And when he says twice, I give it to you, when he talks about Abram's descendants twice inside of that, and when he talks about the dust of the earth twice inside of that, we know from past experience with chiasms that the thing in the middle of the chiasm is the most important thing.

These brackets are focusing our attention on what's in the center. What's in the center of this structure? Look at verse 16. I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered.

The dust of the earth is at the center of the chiasm. This twofold repetition of dust of the earth. That's what's in the middle.

And you think, well, what's that got to do with anything? In other places, do you remember the other times when God talks about how numerous Abram's descendants are going to be? What are the other comparisons that he uses later on? He says the stars in the sky. He talks about the sand on the seashore. But here he says the dust of the earth.

Well, have we ever seen this phrase before? How about back in chapter 2 and 3 of Genesis, where you have the fall in the garden and the speech of God in chapter 3, talking to Adam. And in verse 19 of Genesis 3, God says, In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are, and to dust you will return.

And earlier on in the creation account, it talks about God forming man from the dust of the earth. So the dust of the earth, the last time we saw it, was in the context of cursing, of an unhappy outcome as a result of man's sin. But the great theme of Genesis, in fact the great theme of the Bible, is cursing turned to blessing.

So here you have the dust of the earth to which all men will return because of the fall, and yet God takes that same phrase and makes it a part of a blessing pronouncement. Your descendants are going to be like the dust of the earth. You, Abram, are going to die and return to the dust, but your descendants are going to be like the dust of the earth.

It's a life from death promise. You're going to live on in the sense of your descendants. The blessing and the promise are going to live on and be passed to your descendants.

There's going to be life out from death. And so dust of the earth, instead of being a tolling bell in the cursing pronouncement, now becomes a bright concept in the blessing. And this idea of cursing and blessing, again, is one we saw in Psalm 73 this morning.

What is your viewpoint? Abram could look at the short term and say, well, what's the point of struggling and living in the land and walking by faith if I'm just going to drop in the land, people in Sodom and Gomorrah, they die. I'm wandering around here, I'm going to die. Why not eat, drink, and be merry and concentrate on the moment? You get some of that same thinking over in Ecclesiastes.

What's the point? The righteous and the wicked, they all fall down together and sleep in the earth. But we've already seen that Abram is starting to reflect this longer term view. And so the dust of the earth, he's not going to think about death.

He's going to think about the promise of God to his descendants, that this is something that's going to go forward. It depends on viewpoint, and that's based on choice. I was thinking this morning, and this is a meaningful illustration to me.

I don't know how well it sits in other people's minds, but I was listening to someone on the radio this morning talking about the sovereignty of God from a very Calvinist viewpoint, that God pretty much determines everything that happens. He decides who's going to be saved, and then he tips the board. And it reminded me, if you can imagine a marble sitting on a flat piece of board.

Well, if the marble is at the edge of the board, and you want it to roll toward the center without touching it, what do you do? You tip the board. If you tip the board up on one side, the marble is going to roll, and it's going to roll exactly in the direction that you tipped the board, because it's perfectly round. It doesn't have any directional control at all, and so its direction depends entirely on how you tip the board.

And in the view of a lot of people, this is God, and this is us. God tips the board, and we're these round marbles, and whichever way he tips the board, that's the way we roll. But in the biblical perspective, and you can see it here in the story of Abram a lot, we're not so much like a marble as we are like a wheel.

I am constantly finding these little wheels off of toy cars and things that the girls have, and you find them in the yard from previous children who've taken their toys apart. But if you think about a little wheel, if you could set a wheel on the board, that wheel is like our volition. You can establish a direction with a wheel.

A wheel will not flop over and over against its axis. It wants to roll around its circular edge. So if you think of our volition like the ability to point that wheel, God can tip the board and encourage us to go in a certain direction, but because we're a wheel and not a marble, we can establish a direction that is tangent, that doesn't go the direction the board is being tipped.

Abram and Lot have had the same experience. They've both come to the land. Abram has oriented himself at this point in the story with the will of God, and he's gone right back to the center of the land, right back to the altar, right back to the place of fellowship, right back to the place where God communicates and blesses.

Lot is in the identical circumstances. He's got prosperity. He's seen the same things happen in Egypt.

He's made the same journey from Ur and from Haran. But what is his proclivity? What's his decision? Well, he's got the ability to turn his little wheel, and he's rolling right to the very edge of the board. He's going right to the area of Sodom and Gomorrah.

And if you go back to 1019 of Genesis, when God described the borders of the land, Sodom and Gomorrah is on the very edge. In fact, there's a good chance that Sodom is right outside the border of the land. And so in the same circumstance, with the same potential for blessing from God, you see the difference that's made by choice, by setting

of priorities.

What do you look at and see? What do you mark as a factor when you lift up your eyes and look? Abram lifts up his eyes and looks and sees the land of long-term promise from God. Lot lifts up his eyes and looks and sees the short-term, quick fix to his problems, the land of prosperity. Well, this looks like a good deal.

And that's the way it goes. It's especially interesting before we leave chapter 13. Remember what Abram said in verse 9 to Lot? He said, Is not the whole land before you? Separate for me.

If you take the left, then I will go to the right. Directions are a little bit different in Hebrew than they are in our culture. You're left and you're right.

There's all kinds of humor that's made out of this in the military when they say left and start out on your left foot and so forth. They say hold up your left hand and they hold up the wrong one. They say your other left.

Hold up your right hand. But left and right hand had significance, several levels of significance in Semitic thinking in the Old Testament. And even down to the present.

The right hand is the favored hand. The left hand is the not so great hand. Even in Arabic culture today, food is always passed with the right hand, never with the left.

The left hand is the hand you use for bodily functions. The right hand is not used for those things. The left hand is the unclean hand.

You reserve your right hand for food and for other types of things, you use your left hand. It's a very great affront if you put your left hand on someone in Arabic culture. If you lay your left hand on a child's head, you've just cursed him in their minds.

In fact, you're not even supposed to lay either one of your hands on their heads at all. But there's that idea. And, of course, this is carried all down through history.

Even in Latin, the name for the right hand is dexter, where we get dexterious. The name for the left hand is sinister. And sinister and dexter, you find this out if you study heraldry and family coats of arms and so forth.

They talk about, well, on the sinister you have this, that, and the other. And on the dexter, they're talking about the left hand and the right hand. But you can see how those have come into our vocabulary.

Sinister, left hand. Dexter, right hand. Additionally, in the land of Canaan, Israel in the land, always looked toward the rising sun.

So any time they're giving directions and so forth, they're looking eastward. So the left

hand is north and the right hand is south. And in talking about directions, like Abraham is here in verse 9, when he says, if you go to the left, he's saying, if you go north, I'll go to the right.

I'll go south. If you go south, I'll go north. The options that Abraham is offering Lot is, if you want to go north in the land, I'll go south.

If you want to go southward in the land, I'll go north. Which direction does Lot go? East. Abraham didn't even suggest to him that he go to the east.

But he lifts up his eyes and looks, and instead of looking at the two alternatives Abraham puts before him, he sees the well-watered Jordan plain. Sodom and Gomorrah were notorious for their degeneracy and their evil. But that isn't a factor in Lot's decision.

He's only looking at the short term, how green is the grass. I think there was a book written somewhere called How Green My Valley. Well, that's what he sees.

He looks into the Jordan plain and says, how green my valley. And that's the way he goes. So these are things to watch for because it's not a matter of fate.

It's not a matter of predetermination on the part of God. Although God will encourage us. He gets Lot and Abraham out of the land of Egypt.

They're not supposed to be there. But what do they do when he tips the board? So as we begin chapter 14, we've seen that Lot and Abraham have distinguished themselves and have determined how they're going to be treated by God because of their priorities. Somebody in Lot's position could, in the light of subsequent events, and the Bible is already going to tell us, in fact, it already has told us in verse 10 of chapter 13, it says, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

We already know what's going to happen to Sodom and Gomorrah. But a lot of times people say, why are all these bad things happening to me? Why do I always get the short end of the stick? Why am I having all of these bad outcomes in my life? Lot could say that same thing. When everything he has is destroyed in Sodom, he escapes barely with his life and his two daughters.

His wife doesn't even completely escape and he's left penniless. None of the stuff that he takes into Sodom does he come back out with when Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed. And he could say, why me? Why did this happen to me? And people look in the immediate and say, I mean, it was a Tuesday.

I did everything like I always do on Tuesday and here fire and brimstone fell and destroyed everything I have. How could this possibly happen? And they don't look back to significant decision points as are made here because in the short term when Lot first goes down to dwell in Sodom, everything seems like thumbs up. He's more prosperous.

He's got plenty of pasturage. They appoint him a judge and he sits in the gate down in Sodom and he's got prestige and he's respected. And so he thinks, hey, this was a good decision.

Boy, my problems are solved. Everything is great. Because he's judging by circumstances and how circumstances turned out instead of what does God think.

Is God happy with somebody going and living in Sodom? The New Testament tells us that it was a vexation to Lot's soul. His physical circumstances were great. He was prosperous and respected and so forth.

But it vexed his soul living in Sodom. It was a torture to his soul. It was an injury to his soul to live there.

But that wasn't his criteria. So people often say, why did these things happen to me? What did I do that was so bad? And don't go back and look at these type of decision points. So the setting that we have as we get into chapter 14 is conditioned by these observations.

So now we're ready to start chapter 14. It came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Ariok king of Elessar, Keter Laomer the king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations, that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, Bersha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Adma, Shemeber king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, that is, Zoar. All these joined together in the valley of Siddam, that is, the salt sea.

Twelve years they served Keter Laomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled. In the fourteenth year Keter Laomer and the kings that were with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth, Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh, Kiriath, Thayim, and the Horites in the mountain of Seir, as far as El-Paran, which is by the wilderness. Then they turned back and came to En-Mishpat, that is, Kadesh, and attacked all the country, the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, who dwelt in Hazazon-Tamar.

Now, if you've made it this far, probably all you're impressed with is, boy, there's a lot of strange names in there. I was reading a book to the girls the other night, and the author kept trying to introduce, this is set back in the days of knights and chivalry, and a little bit of mysticism, and pigs that are oracles and prophesy, and so forth. And the author just dives in and starts painting this big picture of all of these different, the king of the dead, and the king of this, and the king of that, and the great warrior, and the horned king with a mask.

He introduces about 15 characters in the space of three paragraphs, and you're just going, oh, I need a chart. I need to map this out. Well, that's exactly what we're going to do here, although not in detail.

We're just going to map this out in general terms, because all we need is a rough idea of

where the power lies at this time. We're going to get a sketch of the powers that be and what they're doing to each other at the time that Abram and Lot are dwelling where they're dwelling. So let me first of all give you just an outline of chapter 14 to help fit this in.

Chapter 14, in a broad view, is going to give us three battles and three meetings. Three battles and three meetings. The three battles are given to us in verses 1 through 16.

Three big military conflicts. Then in verses 17 through 24, we're going to have three meetings. Abram is going to be an attendee at each one of these meetings.

So three battles, three meetings. Three battles in the first half of the chapter, three meetings in the second half. Now, what are the three battles? Well, that's what we have just read about in these first few verses here.

You've got a confederation of eastern kings and a confederation of western kings. It's east versus west. It's like the bowl games after the college football season is over.

You've got the north-south game. You've got the blue-gray game. You've got the east-west.

Well, this is the east-west conflict. Keter Laomer, all you have to know about the east is they're headed up by Keter Laomer. He is the big cheese.

He's the big leader of the eastern confederation. The western kings are down there where Lot lives. Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities around there, those are the westerners.

So everything is fine, but one of the things that Lot has done by going to the very edge of the land is that this is the border and people outside the border who look in across the Jordan and across the fence there and see the well-watered plain and all the goodies there, they're going to want that. So this big eastern confederation says, wow, look at all this neat stuff down here around Sodom and Gomorrah. Let's go get it.

So all of the big eastern confederation is going to come down there and raid the western side. It's very interesting also because there's a tradition in Hebrew of changing names around and mispronouncing someone's name to make it sound like something it's not. That's actually going on in this passage.

A couple of these kings' names are not really their original names. They are intentional Hebrew changes to poke fun at them or to belittle them. When we come back, we'll go through these names real quickly and we'll find out who's who, who's on the east side, who's on the west side, and how all of this relates to Abram and Lot.

But this is a good place to pause now that we've got the battle lines drawn and take our

break.