

Genesis 14 • Abram and Melchizedek

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Genesis chapter 14. We are making our way through the Book of Genesis here on Wednesday night and we are going through the Gospel of John on Sunday mornings, finishing up, I should say, the Gospel of John. But Genesis chapter 14 is an important chapter and we're actually just going to take this 1 chapter tonight because of its importance and particularly because of some of the characters that are brought out in this chapter. And so, let's pray, let's ask the Lord's guidance.

Father, we open our hearts to you tonight and we just yield to you. We yield to your voice, we yield to your heart to teach us tonight and to instruct us in all that is good and right and true and pure and holy. And we ask you, Lord God, to nourish our souls through the Word tonight and minister to us in such a way that as when we get up to leave here this evening, we leave filled up and better prepared to live the life that you've called us to live. We ask that you would do this tonight in Jesus name, amen, amen, amen. All right.

Chapter 14 begins with a time reference and it says, *“In the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, ...” (ESV)* Now you all know Amraphel, I'm joking. This is a time reference for people who lived in that, you know, that period roughly and they would say, oh, yeah, this all happened in the days of Amraphel, yeah, okay. It's kind of like, you know, you and me saying, during the administration of Ronald Reagan, for example. You would know if you know your history, that that's the 1980s. I mean, he was like president for like all of the 1980s, except like 1 year.

So anyway, it's kind of if I started to tell you a story and say, back in the days of Ronald Reagan, when he was in office, you would know it was the 80s. Well, we don't know anything about Amraphel, king of Shinar, that means nothing to you and me. But just so you know, what is about to be described in the next few verses; the timeframe that he's giving you, is approximately 14 years before the events that are going to play out in this chapter, all right.

So he begins here, and so here's what happened 14 years earlier. He says, *“¹ ...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 Zeboim, and the king of*

Bela (that is, Zoar).³ And all these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (and then the tells us here parenthetically) (that is, the Salt Sea)." Or what actually became the salt sea later on, okay. So we're basically told this, we're told that these 3 kings came against 5 kings; 2 of whom ruled the city states of Sodom and Gomorrah and the 5 kings were defeated by the 3 kings, okay. That's what you're being told and this all happened about 14 years before the events play out that are going to play out in this chapter.

Now again, let me just kind of tell you, back in those days nearby city states were conquered usually for acquiring wealth. And the way they would do this is, if you had a fairly strong military and you could overpower your neighbors; the kings of these other various city states in your region, whatever. You could then force them to pay tribute to you which was kind of like an annual gift from that city or people, whatever it might be. Whatever they specialize in, maybe they have a lot of gold in their region, maybe they have silver, maybe they make things, you know, they grow wheat or corn or whatever. Whatever it is, you're basically, because you were able to beat them up and you're the big guy on the block, you can say to them, all right, I'll let you live, but you got to pay me every year so much tribute, all right.

And they say, okay, well, in order to let us live we'll pay you, you know, this sort of a thing, this annual tribute. And you know, you can imagine if you had a fairly strong military, you could conquer the various city states around you and you could become very wealthy as a king because you've got all these various city states that are paying you tribute every year. I mean, they're just pouring things into your kingdom that you don't have to work for, well, except militarily, I suppose, initially. So anyway, it was a way to get, you know, wealth.

So the next thing we're told in verse 4 is that, "*Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, ...*" And Chedorlaomer is mentioned there because he was the strongest of the 3 kings. The other 2 were most likely kings that he had conquered and we're now subject to him, and so they were now his allies.

And then it goes on to say, "*...but in the thirteenth year, they (and that refers to the 5 kings) rebelled.*" And the word rebelled, simply means, they refused after 13 years to pay tribute. They basically said, we're not going to send this guy one more bag of oranges, I don't know if they grew oranges, I'm just throwing it out there. We're not going to send him any more wheat, we're not going to send him anymore, we're keeping it all for ourselves. This guy can just, you know, go take a long walk off a short dock. That's a stupid thing to say, but you know

what I mean. They're basically saying, you know, we're not going to do this anymore, we're not going to pay him any more money, all right.

All right, so what's going to happen now? Well, you can probably guess. So “⁵*In the fourteenth year (now we come to the present of when this is kind of happening) 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.*”

So, what this is telling you and me, is that on their way to go and punish these 5 kings who rebelled, they were punishing or they were conquering other people along the way, that's what it's saying. And so they're getting these other city states to now pay tribute to them and because they conquered them and so forth as they were making their way down to fight the 5 kings who rebelled, all right.

So, now they were more people groups that were gathered together and so forth. So, the 5 kings that rebelled, they're obviously hearing about this, about Chedorlaomer and how he's coming to punish us and he's conquering other city states along the way, and so what are they going to do?

Well, in verse 8 it says, “*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 that's an addition, he didn't come out the first time to conquer him, but he's joined him in the second one) and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings against five.*” Remember it was originally 3 against 5, but Chedorlaomer has kind of bolstered his military a little bit with the king of Shinar. By the way, Shinar, is the ancient name for Babylon, okay. So he's got a pretty good force that he's coming against these kings with.

And look at verse 10, this is interesting. It says, “*Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits, ...*” Your Bible may say asphalt or tar pits, that's interesting, isn't it? Well, we've long known that the Middle East was rich in petroleum products, they still are, you know, today. And frankly, even today, lumps of bitumen can be found floating in the Dead Sea and the Dead Sea, by the way, is this region of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Sodom and Gomorrah, as you know, we're going to get to this in chapter 18. In 19, is going to be completely destroyed and the Salt Sea is going to be in its place. So it's interesting that even today, they find chunks of bitumen you know, which is related to coal, asphalt, tar, literally floating in the water. And these tar pits are going to figure prominently in later chapters when we find out how God destroyed the area. Because do you guys remember how God is going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah? He rained down something from heaven, remember what it was? It was fire, guess what fire does when it hits petroleum products? Yeah, so it was all kind of put together very, you know, neatly to really just kind of, you know, cook the whole area.

So anyway, reading on in verse 10. “...and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, (that is the bitumen pits or the tar pits) and the rest fled to the hill country.” In other words, they lost.

“¹¹ ...So the enemy (and that's Chedorlaomer) 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.” Now it's interesting, this says that Lot was dwelling in Sodom. Last we knew a Lot, he simply was heading towards Sodom and Gomorrah to kind of live in the region, but in the ensuing time, he has actually taken up residence now in the city of Sodom. And I think you guys know what Sodom is all about and what the name implies. I mean, it's where we get our word sodomy today. So you can imagine, because we read in the last chapter that the men of Sodom were behaving very wickedly and this is what that was all about.

So, in the end, you know, the rebellion of the 5 kings didn't work out too well because this time Chedorlaomer didn't just impose tribute. He basically came, conquered them and took everything. He didn't conquer them and say, all right, I'm going to..., you guys just pay me every year. He said, that's it, you guys rebel against me, I'm going to come and conquer you and just take everything you have and take it to my house, right? So that's essentially what happened.

Verse 13, “Then one who had escaped (and we heard that several had escaped up into the hill country) came and told Abram the Hebrew, ...” By the way, you might make note of the fact, this is the very first time in the Bible that the word Hebrew appears, all right. So it says, he “...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.” That's an important statement.

Verse 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.”* Now you can tell that Abram is a very wealthy man to have a lot of servants who are not only there to serve in areas of just day to day life, but these men are trained in battle. So, you know, Abram was a very, very wealthy man and he goes out to basically rescue his nephew who's been taken captive by Chedorlaomer.

Okay, there's something else I need to make a point of. Did you notice at the end of verse 14, it says that he went in pursuit of them as far as Dan? Well, you might read that and be a little confused because Dan is named after the tribe of Dan and basically that's a way of saying he pursued them very far to the north. But Dan hasn't been born yet, but they're calling it the region of Dan because the people who, when they wrote this down, a modern reader would understand, oh, that's up north in that area of Dan and so forth.

The town that was later referred to as Dan didn't actually come into being until the times of the Judges, which is hundreds of years later. So this is one of those things you need to understand about your Bible. The Bible often uses names that were current for the reader but weren't current at the time of the event. Does that make sense? You know, it's kind of like us mentioning towns along the Oregon trail that didn't exist back when the pioneers were on the Oregon trail, but we would mention the town just to give you the modern hearer or reader a sense of, oh, I see where they were. Oh, they were around Veil or they were around Baker City or something like that, when those towns weren't actually... They were gathering places but they weren't actually towns yet when the initial Oregon trail was in existence. So anyway, so, you know, the mention of man is, Dan rather is to inform us of just how far north Abram pursued Chedorlaomer.

Verse 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.”* So he's up around Syria and then check out this next verse, *“¹⁶ Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.”*

So, not only did he chase Chedorlaomer and his entire army and beat them down and basically, and we're going to find out later, it's called a slaughter. But he got all the goods and all the people who had been taken from those towns. And we're not even sure how many of that it was, we just know that Lot and his family was among them.

So it says in verse 17, that “*After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).¹⁸ And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (and then we're told here parenthetically) (He was priest of God Most High.)*” Now, stop there, because if you're reading your Bible, and you really don't know that much about things in the Bible, you're kind of like, who? First of all, how do you even pronounce it and then second of all, where did this guy come from? Melchizedek. And we don't know very much about him except kind of what is mentioned here about him specifically.

Well, first of all, let me tell you that his name, Melchizedek means king of Righteousness. Okay, that's interesting, isn't it? But we're also told that he was the king of Salem. Now Salem is the Hebrew word Shalom, which is peace, so he was the king of peace. And by the way, this city, Shalom, will later be renamed Yerushayalim or Jerusalem, all right.

So there's a lot of interesting tidbits and facts about this person that just jumps out at us named Melchizedek. But what's really kind of befuddling to us is that we're told, “*He was a priest of God Most High.*” And by the way, God Most High is the Hebrew El Elyon and it means just that, the highest of gods, you know, the big God, you know, sort of a thing, right? Because there were a lot of gods that people dealt with back in those days, they were very pagan. So this was a way of saying, He's the God of gods, right?

So here you have Melchizedek and this is all rather challenging for us as believers because we read that he was a priest. And we're thinking to ourselves, wait a minute, the priesthood wasn't even brought into being until the time of Moses, when God gave the law and made Moses's brother, Aaron, the first priest of the Lord, and that's when the priesthood was even, came to be. This is way before that and so we're kind of wondering what is going on here. We know of no priestly order outside of the order of Aaron, which we call it the Aaronic priesthood. So where did this come from, you know? And yet, we're told in the Psalms that this priesthood, this order that Melchizedek represents is the very order that Messiah will come in. Let me show you this on the screen from Psalm 110. It says,

Psalm 110:1, 4 (ESV)

The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Well, we're going to find out more about the order of Melchizedek at the end of our study here this evening. But what we're told here is that Melchizedek and Messiah are both going to have a unique order to their priestly role and what that means simply is, it's not going to be in the order of Aaron, okay. It's not part of the Aaronic priesthood. You see, because to be a priest in Israel, you had to be a descendant of Aaron. Jesus was not born from the house of Aaron and yet He came as a priest. Oh, and there's one more thing about Melchizedek that is interesting to note, he was both a priest and a king and that's important too, because, so is Jesus; our High Priest and also our King. So these two have an incredible amount in common.

Some of you might even be wondering or even wanting to ask right now, well, does that mean that Melchizedek and Jesus are one in the same? Well, we'll answer that here in just a moment as we look up a little bit more about Melchizedek from the New Testament, but let's go on and read the rest of this story because this is interesting.

Verse 19. And then it says, *“And he (Melchizedek) blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, (El Elyon) Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰ and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand! (and then look at this) And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.””* Of everything he had, he gave him a tenth. That doesn't mean he gave him a tenth of what he gained that week or that month, he gave him a tenth of everything he had, isn't that interesting? So you can tell that Abram thinks very highly of this man named Melchizedek.

Now, the king of Sodom is going to kind of weigh in on this a little bit and so it says in verse 21 that, *“And the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, (in other words, the people that Chedorlaomer took captive) but take the goods for yourself.””* In other words, you can have all of the booty, all of the spoils, you can just keep it. I want all, just give me my people and you can have everything else.

Verse 22, *“But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, ...”* Interesting here, Abram uses the same name: Elyon, that Melchizedek, right, used in his blessing. And so Abraham is connecting for you and me, his understanding that YAHWEH and El Elyon are one and the same, okay. So we know we're not talking about two different deities here.

He says, *“²² ... “I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth,” ²³ that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or*

anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.' ²⁴ I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share." Remember, we were told that they were Abram's allies. So apparently at some point they came out and they helped with some of the fighting. Because here, Abram says, give them a portion of whatever some of the spoils are, that's their business. But as for me, and for my house, we will take nothing from you, lest you should ever boast and say, I made Abram rich.

So what is Abram saying here about the king of Sodom? Well, he probably knew that if he was going to accept something from the king of Sodom for anything he might have done, it would somehow make him obliged to the king of Sodom and he didn't want there to be a connection. He didn't want there to be a yoke between him and the king of Sodom.

You know, because once you take, once you accept gifts from somebody, you're obligated, aren't you? And you know that, even if it's just an emotional obligation, there's some kind of an obligation going on. And Abraham didn't want to have it because he knew the kind of a man the king of Sodom was and he knew that he was contrary to everything he believed and held dear about the Lord, his God. And so he didn't want to be unequally yoked with this sort of a man.

Instead, what does he do? He confesses his complete and total dependence is upon the Lord God to do all that He had promised to do. And you'll remember what He had promised to do was to make Abram great, He said, I will make you into a great nation. Well, Abram was like, well, that's going to be God who does that, see. If God called me to this place of being a great nation, He's going to make me a great nation, right? In other words, where God guides, God provides. Now, that's not a biblical phrase, but it's a biblical sentiment. When I say it's not a biblical phrase, I'm saying, you can't look it up in the Bible and find it.

But the sentiment is throughout the Word of God; where God guides, God provides. In other words, when God calls, He's going to take care of the calling. You know, one of the most common questions that I get from people who are, who have a sense of their calling, or their direction from the Lord is how to go about walking it out, you know?

And I say the same thing to everybody who asks, it's not yours to work it out how it is going to come about. If God has called you into an area of ministry, if He's called you into an area of life, He's going to work it out. He doesn't just call you and then go, okay, go fend for yourself, have fun, just scrape up what you

can along the way, I don't know if there will be much, but you know, just have at it. Does that sound like the Lord to you? It sounds nothing like the Lord.

Where God guides, God provides. So has He called you to an area? Don't worry about it. Well, you're thinking, well, I can't, He's called me this, but I can't do this right now. Well, then the timing isn't right, be patient, wait. When the provision is there, you'll know you're ready to go, or, you know, the Lord might say to you, step out and I'll provide as you go, that's cool too, you know. He might not provide ahead of time, He might provide, in other words, He might part the waters as soon as you step into the waters, but He'll still provide, He's still going to do the providing.

You know, it comes down to churches too. Can I just brag for just a minute on the Lord? We made a determination when we started this church almost 33 years ago now, that we were never, ever, number one, ever going to take an offering and we were never going to ever ask you for money for the church. And we've held to that in almost 33 years.

I have sat back and just been in blown away by God's faithfulness and you know, it makes sense. He called me, He called Sue and me to come here to Ontario and start a church here. And do you think He called us here so that we would just, you know, we can't make it work, it's just not working. You know, again, that doesn't sound like the Lord to say, I'm calling you, I'm sending you out, but you've got to fend for yourself or you got to ask, you got to ask, you got to beg, you need to learn how to beg.

You know, you go to some churches and I'm sorry to say it kind of sounds like they're begging sometimes. And I'm not trying to put churches down, I'm sorry if it sounds that way, but sometimes it seems like there's some begging going on and it's like, wait a minute, did God call you to start that church or to be the pastor? Did He call that church into being? Then why are you hammering the people? Where God guides, God provides.

I've even had pastors look me in the eye when I've told them that we don't take an offering. He goes, "you know, your offerings would be bigger if you took an offering." I don't care, I want to do like Abram, I want to brag and say I'm not going to take a sandal that I had to beg for or a strap of a sandal. I'm going to wait and I'm going to depend on the Lord, I'm going to let Him do the providing and if the providing isn't there, then we pack up and we go somewhere else, I suppose. You know what I mean?

But the Lord has been providing so incredibly. You know, for years in the early days of our fellowship, I've always had such great elders come alongside me and you know, in the early days of the church, we've always tried to take the money that does, the Lord does bring in here and give some of it out to missions. And we started off kind of small, you know, and then we got to a place where we were doing about like, you know, about 10%, giving it out to missions and so forth. But the elders kept bugging me, “more, give more, give more,” and I was like, “how much?” And one of the elders, who's not with us anymore, he moved away after he retired, but he kept saying, “30%, you should aim for 30% to give away to missions.”

And I remember thinking to myself, that's a lot, that's a lot, you know. Lord, would you do something like that? In the last year, I think we've given about 34% to missions, which has been so cool. So we've seen that come to pass, but we've seen it come to pass, well, I'm not bragging on us, I'm bragging on the Lord you see. He did it, we didn't do it, He did it, see.

All we did is just make a determination, you know, I'm not going to, I'm not going to do that, I'm not going to ask, I'm not going to beg. I'm not going to, would you please give, we're not going to do that. And it gives you the opportunity to brag on God and Abraham, Abram, could brag on God. I didn't accept anything from the king of Sodom, he offered me all the loot and I didn't take it because God is the one who promised to provide and I'm going to let Him provide.

Do you understand that sometimes when we step out in our own strength to make that provision happen, we're just simply not letting God do what He wants to do, you know? So, okay, I promised you, one final passage from the New Testament to talk a little bit more about Melchizedek. And where we find that, I'll show it on the screen, is in Genesis, oh I'm sorry, Hebrews chapter 7, verses 1 through 3. Look at this with me, it says,

Hebrews 7:1-3 (ESV)

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings (there's where the word slaughter is, I told you that) and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is (and he's talking about Melchizedek now, He is) first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. (remember that's Shalom) He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.

Now I want to, we'll leave that up here so you can kind of keep looking at some of the wording in there because I want you to notice something that's very important about that passage. The author of Hebrews says that Melchizedek resembles the Son of God, did you catch that? In the sense that he appears to be eternal.

When it says that Melchizedek is without father or mother or genealogy, it's not saying he didn't have a mother or a father or any kind of a genealogy. It's saying he had no record of his parentage or his family line, either before him or after him, he had no record of those things. So in that sense, he resembles the Son of God, who is God without beginning and ending. Jesus, right, as God, has no beginning or ending.

Now, Jesus, as the Son of man, has a genealogy, as we know. But as God, He has no beginning or ending. And so, the writer of Hebrews is telling you that Melchizedek serves as this symbolic representation of Jesus, and why? Because as we already read in the Psalms, Jesus would come in the order of Melchizedek, meaning, not according to the order of Aaron or according to the order of the law.

Jesus didn't come representing the priesthood of the law, He came representing the priesthood of the Father to do His priestly intercession for you and me on the cross when He died for us, bearing our sin. So it's important, I believe, not to make too much of this person, Melchizedek. He is truly a special character, but he is not the pre-incarnate Jesus. He was a man who resembled, through his lack of any record of his origin and through his crazy, unique priesthood order, he resembles the Son of God, amen? All right. Well, that's where we're going to stop.

I felt like this chapter kind of needed its own, its own spotlight so we're going to give you some time for fellowship. For those of you that have kids over in the other building, you can kind of hang out for a little while and talk. Wouldn't that

be fun? Yeah, fellowships, very cool, getting to know people, what a treat. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank you so much that you are so good to us and so faithful and Lord, we see that. You were even faithful Lord to Lot, even when he was really kind of representing a backslidden kind of a state by his going and living among the people of Sodom. And yet, Lord, you were faithful and you used Abram to rescue him and his family. And Lord, you were faithful to Abram to go in and defeat those 4 kings in a slaughter and not only bring back all of the goods, but all of the people unharmed. What an amazing God you are and Lord, I thank you for the statement that Abram made about not accepting anything that would cast a dim light on the blessings that he was to receive.

Lord, he wanted it to be you, He wanted all the glory to go to you and that's what I want, Lord, I want all the glory to go to you. We don't deserve any bit of it Lord, we are undeserving servants and you are the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. You deserve the glory and the honor and the praise, and we worship you as the God who not only guides but also provides.

So Father God, I want to just pray for anybody here or who's watching online, who is dealing with some sort of a question about where's this going to come from? How is the Lord going to provide according to this calling? I sense in my heart that they would just rest in you, trust in you and patiently endure, until that provision is made manifest or until you give them the word and just say, go, with the assurance that you will provide upon the way.

I pray in Jesus name that your servants would wait for you and not try to make their own way or to find their own path or to provide for their own needs. But they would wait on the provision of the Lord, for you God are faithful and you're the one who told us to trust in you with all of our hearts?

What a wonderful challenge that is to each and every one of us and I pray that we would conform ourselves to that challenge. Whatever our challenges may be, help me, Lord, to grow in my faith and to trust in you every step of the way. We lay these things at your feet, knowing that you are faithful and we pray it in the name of Jesus, our Savior and King, and all God's people said together, amen.

God bless you.