

Genesis 14:1-24

Abram Interacts with Various Kings

Conflict is all around us

- It can be road rage on the freeway
- It can be at work
- It can be at home
- It can be at church

We can't control how others are going to treat us

- We can, however, control how we treat others

This is what makes life very uncertain

- We never know when the next episode of conflict will arise

For Abram, he had just dealt with a very difficult situation between Lot's herdsmen and his herdsmen

- Abram took the initiative and sought to bring about peace
- He allowed Lot to choose where he wanted to settle

Lot chose the area around the valley of the Jordan (13:10-12)

- Little did he know about the effects of his choice

After Lot had distanced himself from Abram, the LORD reaffirmed His promises to Abram

- What a reassurance this must have been for Abram!

The chapter ends on a note of worship as Abram "built an altar to the LORD" in Hebron (13:18)

- This is now the third time that Abram has done this

But we are totally unexpected for what takes place in Genesis 14

- War is spoken of!

Let's read Genesis 14:1-24

This morning we are going to look at Genesis 14 which covers two major events

- The war of the kings (14:1-12)
- Abram's encounter with the kings (14:13-24)

I. The war of the kings (14:1-12)

And it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, ² that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). ³ All these came as allies to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). ⁴ Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but the thirteenth year they rebelled.

Without much preparation, we are abruptly dropped into the middle of a conflict

- There is an eastern alliance and a western alliance

The eastern alliance consists of four (4) kings (14:1)

- “Amraphel king of Shinar”
- “Arioch king of Ellasar”
- “Chedorlaomer king of Elam”
- “Tidal king of Goiim”

The western alliance consists of five (5) kings (14:2)

- “Bera king of Sodom”
- “Birsha king of Gomorrah”
- “Shinab king of Admah”
- “Shemeber king of Zeboiim”
- “the king of Bela (that is, Zoar)”

The Text mentions that this first war took place “in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar”

- If you flip back to Genesis 10:10, we remind ourselves of this area of the world
- Nimrod, in seeking to build his dynasty and kingdom, sought to set up his home base in Babel, “in the land of Shinar” (10:10)
- We know from Genesis 11 that it was in Shinar that the city of Babel was intended to be built (11:2)

We don’t have a lot of information to date this particular war in Genesis 14

- We are not sure how long these events transpired after the LORD’s confusion of the languages at Babel
- Nevertheless, one of the kings was from this area and was part of the eastern alliance

Genesis 14:3 tells us that these were “allies”

- They were working together

There were five (5) smaller towns in the western alliance

- They acted independently of one another, each having its own king
- This was more of a loose confederation of cities working together¹

Apparently, the eastern alliance had defeated the western alliance in the past

- To be specific, fourteen years before the events in our current chapter of Genesis

No exact details are given regarding the war

- We don’t know whether it was a big or small war
- We don’t know about casualties

For twelve years, the western alliance “had served Chedorlaomer” (14:4)

- In those days, when one nation defeated another, the victor took the spoils
- But the victor could also require an annual amount of money from those who had been defeated
- For twelve years, the western nations had been sending their money to the eastern alliance

But then in the thirteenth (13th) year, the western nations “rebelled”

- They wanted out of this servitude that they had been in

¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Genesis 1-15*, 310.

⁵ And in the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim and the Zuzim in Ham and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶ and the Horites in their Mount Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness. ⁷ Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and conquered all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-tamar.

So for twelve years, the money was rolling in

- But then the money doesn't come in on the thirteenth year

Now they couldn't just pick up a phone or send an email to confirm payment and/or shipping!

- These nations were separated by upwards of 2000 miles

So when year 13 came and went without payment, the eastern alliance knew what had happened

- There was no warning
- There was no second chance
- The nations went to war

But we read in verses 5-7, we read of several areas that are not part of the western alliance

- Why did the eastern nations defeat these other areas of the world?

Well, we can only speculate

- Perhaps the eastern nations did not want anyone to attack from them behind²
 - o Therefore, they annihilated those nations leading up to the five cities in focus
- Perhaps the eastern alliance destroyed some of these nations so that they would have adequate food and supplies before embarking on their primary target

We do know a little information about some of these people mentioned

- The “**Rephaim**,” “**Zuzim**,” and “**Emim**” were all reported to be giants³
- These would be men like Goliath!

⁸ And the king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah and the king of Admah and the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) came out; and they arrayed for battle against them in the valley of Siddim, ⁹ against Chedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goiim and Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar – four kings against five.

After the eastern nations took care of their secondary missions, they finally arrive at their primary destination

- They are here to wage war with the rebellious westerners who had refused to pay their tribute money in the thirteenth year

Verses 8 & 9 draw up the two sides of the war

- Five kings from the west
- Four kings from the east

² Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 314.

³ *Ibid.*, 314.

¹⁰ Now the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell into them. But those who survived fled to the hill country.

The location of the battle – “the valley of Siddim” – is given with a little explanatory note, “was full of tar pits”

- This is the same substance that the inhabitants of Babel used, “they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar” (11:3, emphasis mine)

Not much information is given about this second battle

- But we do read that “the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled”

Instead of staying and fighting to the death for their cities, they retreat!

- The Text says further that they “fell into” these tar pits

Others who survived “fled to the hill country”

- They escaped to the nearby mountain ranges in the area

¹¹ Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed. ¹² And they also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom.

From the brief amount of information in the account, it seems that the eastern nations breezed through the area without much trouble

- Once again, the western nations were defeated and humbled

Since these western nations failed to pay their tribute money, the eastern alliance came in and defeated them a second time in war

- As their prize, “they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply”(14:11)

They demoralized these cities by defeating them

- Then they proceeded to carry out the victor’s spoils

Verse 12 adds a very important note about the spoils of the eastern alliance, “and they also took Lot, Abram’s nephew, and his possessions...for he was living in Sodom”

Back in chapter 13, we read that he had “moved his tents as far as Sodom” (13:12)

- Here in 14:12, we see that he was “living in Sodom”
- In 19:1, we will see that Lot is “sitting in the gate” as a leader in the city⁴

Because Lot was living in the city of Sodom, he was taken away as part of the victor’s spoils

- He was treated as a citizen of the city!

These wars were quite common in these days

- Conflicts like this arose quite often as kings went to battle with other kings

But this part of Genesis is about Abram

- How does he involved in this story?

That is where we turn next, to see...

⁴ Morris, 304.

II. Abram's encounter with the kings (14:13-24)

¹³ Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram.

The perspective suddenly switches from one of war to one of peace

- We are transported off of the battlefield

We are reacquainted with Abram who was “**living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner**”

- This is precisely the last place that Abram was mentioned in Genesis 13
- The closing verse says, “**Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD**” (13:18)

We are not sure how much time elapsed between chapter 13 and 14

- But it was enough time for Abram to become “**allies**” with these three brothers

From the middle of the war, someone comes and tells Abram what is going on

- But notice what the Text says in 14:13, “**Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew**”

This is our first time seeing this word “**Hebrew**”

- The derivation of this term comes from Eber, the great-grandson of Shem (Gen 10:21)

This term is oftentimes used of an outsider referring to someone who is a Jew (Gen 39:14, 17; 41:12; Ex 1:15, 16, 19)⁵

- It is an ethnic term for someone who is from Israel

¹⁴ And when Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

Abram would have probably been rather disinterested in the war up until this point

- Then the messenger tells him that Lot, his nephew, had been captured!
- Once again, Abram's loyalty to family is dramatically different from his time in Egypt

Now let's pause the tape for a minute

- From Genesis 13, we know that Abram was *extremely* generous with Lot, giving him first choice of the land

Lot himself *chose* to live in the valley of the Jordan

- He *chose* to live near the city of Sodom

Let's be honest...

- If you were Abram, would there be a bit of irony in this?
- Would you be thinking, “*Well, well, well...I hope this teaches him a lesson!*”

If those thoughts are in your mind, rest assured that they weren't in Abram's

- The Text informs us that Abram “**led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan**”

⁵ Victor P. Hamilton, *NICOT, Genesis 1-17*, 405.

Amazing, isn't it?

- Abram immediately goes into action for the sake of his nephew
- He assembles a team of 318 men to rescue Lot from this eastern alliance

¹⁵ And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus.

Abram is a wise man

- Instead of keeping his team intact, he divides them into a few groups
- Then he decides to attack at night, under the cover of darkness

This surprise attack certainly was effective!

- Genesis 14:15 says that Abram “**defeated**” this eastern alliance

Now let's keep in mind that these eastern nations had defeated six other groups of people *before* arriving in the area with Sodom and Gomorrah

- In total, they defeated eleven (11) nations!

Here comes Abram with 318 men and he gets the victory!

This reminds us of other accounts in the Bible where God brings about the victory through a small number of human forces

- We think of Gideon who went from 32,000 down to 300 men (Judges 7)
- We think of Elijah who stood alone against 850 false prophets on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18)

¹⁶ And he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people.

So Abram is returning from the war, traveling a long distance

- Moses records that Abram “**brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people**”

Abram is the hero!

- He has rescued his nephew, Lot
- But he has also brought back all of the goods that were stolen from Sodom and Gomorrah, as told in verse 11

Sometimes we wish that more information was given in Scripture

- For example, no words are recorded from Lot
- Was he grateful?
- Did he learn from his mistake?

We don't have a lot of extra information given

- But we do know that he moves right back to the area of Sodom
- In chapter 19 we see that he is seated as one of the leaders of Sodom (19:1)!

¹⁷ Then 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; now he was a priest of God Most High.

As Abram returns back toward the land of promise, he is met by two kings

- “the king of Sodom”
- “Melchizedek king of Salem”

It appears that these two kings came out to meet Abram at the same time⁶

These kings are coming out to congratulate Abram on being the victor

- But the manner in which they interact with Abram is quite different

Although “the king of Sodom” is listed first, more information is given about Melchizedek

- So we will study him first

Out of nowhere, Melchizedek appears

- He is listed as “king of Salem”
- Most believe that “Salem” is a reference to Jerusalem⁷

The word Melchizedek actually means “king of righteousness” (Heb 7:2)

- Outside of Genesis 14, he only appears in the Biblical record in Psalm 110 and Hebrews 5, 6, & 7

Considering the fact that this area around Canaan was filled with wickedness, it might be surprising to us to read of a king who was marked by “righteousness”⁸

He is both king and priest as the Text informs us

- This is the first instance of the word “priest” in Genesis
- He “was a priest of God Most High”

The term “God Most High” refers to the One true God as revealed in His Word

- He is the Sovereign God⁹
- He is the Almighty
- He is the Creator

Abram recognized that he and Melchizedek served the same God!

- They were spiritual brothers¹⁰

God would also have us to know that Melchizedek has a true knowledge of God even though he is not part of the Abrahamic lineage

- This would be a great encouragement for those nations who were not born into the family of Abraham

Melchizedek does appear as a type of Christ

- He is a fascinating character to study
- Much of the detail about this man I will have to leave for you to study on your own

⁶ Wenham, 316.

⁷ Derek Kidner, *Tyndale OT Commentaries, Genesis*, 121.

⁸ Morris, 318.

⁹ John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, 181.

¹⁰ Leon J. Wood, *A Shorter Commentary on Genesis*, 68.

We do know that he came out to meet Abram

- And he “brought out bread and wine”

For a soldier who had just been through an intense battle, some food and drink would have been a God-send

- That is exactly what this king gives to Abram

No doubt, this food and drink were also a token of appreciation for his valiant efforts to ward off the eastern alliance¹¹

¹⁹ And he blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰ and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.”

Melchizedek begins to bless Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰ and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand”

- Melchizedek recognized and acknowledged that Abram is blessed of God
- This reminds us of the promises of God to bless Abram back in chapter 12

But Melchizedek also recognizes that it is God “Who has delivered your enemies into your hand”

- It wasn't so much Abram's strength, wisdom, or cleverness that won the victory
- It was the LORD who gave the victory

And he gave him a tenth of all.

Abram recognized Melchizedek as his superior

- We know that because Abram gave “a tenth” to Melchizedek
- Hebrews 7:2 confirms that it was Abram, not Melchizedek, who “gave a tenth”

We have to understand that the Law of God had not been given as of yet

- So Abram was not obligated to give a tenth of his spoil to Melchizedek

This highlights the character of Abram

- He generous and gracious with Lot, giving him first choice of the land
- He personally went and rescued Lot from the eastern alliance

Now we see Abram voluntarily giving “a tenth of all”

- This was a sign of gratitude to God
- As a priest, Melchizedek would have been the proper channel through whom this tithe would have been given

This act by Abram was a recognition that God was the Victor

Even before the Law was given, Abram was a man who lived by God's righteous standard¹²

- He sought to live in a manner that is consistent with God's character

¹¹ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 1*, 132.

¹² John H. Sailhamer, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 1*, 124.

²¹ And the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.”

Now the king of Sodom speaks

- But what a contrast between him and Melchizedek

Melchizedek’s first words were “**Blessed be Abram...**”¹³

- The king of Sodom’s first word was, “**Give...**”

He wants Abram to give him the people back

- Abram can keep the goods

What audacity for this king to demand what takes place with the spoils!

- He had been hiding in a tar pit, running from battle
- He had no right to tell Abram what to do!

²² And Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, ²³ that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ ²⁴ I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share.”

Abram refused to grant the desire of the king of Sodom

- He knew that if he were to accept this offer, the king of Sodom could boast of making Abram rich

Abram had learned his lesson in Egypt

- There the Pharaoh of Egypt gave him all kinds of livestock in exchange for his wife

Now Abram wanted his dependency to be upon the LORD exclusively¹⁴

- The promises of God would be ones that required faith in God
 - o Faith in His timing
 - o Faith in His ability

Abram would not even take “**a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours**”

- Not even the smallest item would Abram take

Abram tells the king of Sodom, “**I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth**” (14:22)

- Abram had bound himself by oath
- Abram had bound himself to the LORD God Most High

This is the same God to Whom Abram had called on previously (12:8; 13:4)

- Abram was loyal and faithful to Yahweh¹⁵

Of course, Abram understood that those who had served with him could take part in the spoils

- He informed the king of Sodom that he would take a portion for “**the men who went with me**”
- This was Abram’s way of acknowledging their service and sacrifice

¹³ Kenneth A. Mathews, *NAC, Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 146.

¹⁴ Wood, 69.

¹⁵ Sailhamer, 121.

Those who were in an alliance with Abram shared in the blessing of victory¹⁶

- Isn't this what God had promised Abram back in chapter 12?
- God was once again showing that His promises would come true

Abram was faced with this confrontation after being in battle

- After traveling such a great distance to rescue his nephew, Lot, he was faced with a big decision
- How would he interact with these two kings?

Sometimes God places such a challenge before us after a time of great victory

- Perhaps you have seen that in your own life
- You have a spiritual victory, only to be met by a severe challenge

We know that Christ had been fasting for 40 days

- Then Satan tempted Him

Abram passed the test

- He relied on faith, not sight
- He relied on God's promises, not the word of a pagan king

We have taken a look at a portion of Scripture that has highlighted the reality of conflict

- That, of course, is a by-product of the Fall of man

In the fourth chapter of James, the Bible says, “**What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ² You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.**” (4:1-3)

We have seen this carried out in the book of Genesis

- The first instance of this was in the Garden
 - o Adam and Eve were surrounded by perfection; however, temptation caused them to choose disobedience over obedience
 - o Their choice was the root of all conflict
- Cain became sinfully angry over the fact that he and his offering were rejected by the LORD
 - o So, he killed Abel, his brother
- The sin of Genesis 6 caused there to be great conflict between man and the LORD
 - o The result was that God sent the Flood to destroy all of humanity, except for 8 individuals
- Noah became drunk and uncovered himself in the tent
 - o His son, Ham, saw his nakedness and didn't act in an appropriate manner
 - o The result was conflict between a father and a son
- Nimrod arrogantly defied the command of God and sought to establish a kingdom that would prevent separation all over the world
 - o The result was God confounding their language

¹⁶ Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, 293.

This morning, we read of three wars that took place due to conflict

- Blood was shed
- Lives were affected

When Adam sinned, that spiritual rebellion and separation was passed on to his children

- It was then passed on to his children
- All the way down to us today

Yes, you and I are still bearing the consequences of one man's sin

- One of those consequences is conflict, war, and tension

God promised Satan, **“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”** (3:15)

If we fastforward the tape a few thousand years, we see the fulfillment of the promise given in Genesis 3:15

- Jesus Christ is the unique God-Man
- He is the seed of woman who didn't come about through a human male
- Therefore, He is especially qualified in dealing with Satan

This morning as we celebrate the Lord's Table, I would encourage you to examine your lives

- Perhaps you are here and realize that you don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ
- You are fully aware that your sins have never been forgiven

If that describes you, I would ask that you turn your bulletin over to the back and prayerfully read those verses

- They will explain to you
 - o The character of God
 - o The condition of your soul
 - o The consequences of your sin
 - o The plan of salvation

If you are here as a believer, perhaps you realize that you have sinful habits and patterns in your life that are not pleasing to God

- It is easy to compare our lives with others, deceiving ourselves into thinking that we are better than others
- But we are to compare our lives to God Who is utterly perfect, sinless, and holy

If you are aware of unconfessed sin in your life, don't partake in this celebration

- It would be better for you to confess your sins to the Lord and get things right than to eat and drink in an **“unworthy”** manner (1 Cor 11:27)