

# Genesis

## Chapter 14



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**Torah Class:** Before we discuss this chapter, I'd like to take a few minutes to discuss something of a general, but important, nature concerning the Bible. And, it involves a rather scholarly and legal term: the word is "redacted".

Redacted is a word you're going to hear with some regularity in Torah Class; it simply means, "edited". And, I know that it bothers some Christians to be told that you are NOT reading the original scriptures in your Bibles. These writings went through many revisions over the ages. But, I also want to assure you, that these revisions..... particularly to the OT..... were very minor. We know this is the case because with the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were written down by the Essenes over a period time stretching from around 50 BC to just before 70 AD, we have been able to compare the words of the Hebrew OT scriptures found among those Dead Sea documents with what we have been using for centuries, and they are virtually identical. Only some minor spelling variations were found, and perhaps a phrase here and there was added or dropped or modified.....usually by adding, deleting, or changing a person's name or a city..... and THAT because that name or city more recently went by a different name or title due to language evolution; none of these minor variations had any effect on the meaning.

Now, understand that the OLDEST OT documents written in Hebrew currently in use in our modern Bibles were copies from the late 900's A.D.....just before the time of the Crusaders. The finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls, in one giant leap, took us back almost 1000 years from that time, which is partly why that find was so important to us; so to see that virtually no meaningful changes had occurred over a 1000 years attests to the dedication of the hundreds and thousands of Jews who had hand-copied the Hebrew Bible for further use and distribution over that 10 century period. What we are reading in the Torah is very accurate.....at least in the original Hebrew.

Where we have a few problems is with the translations from Hebrew to other languages. And, the first translation of the OT from Hebrew to another language was in Greek..... and that was accomplished about 200 years BEFORE the Dead Sea Scrolls were written down. Called the Septuagint, the Greek language version of the OT has also proven to have been faithfully copied and handed down over the centuries, so it, too, is a most useful and accurate document. However, as we have discussed before, there are very real challenges in translating the THOUGHTS of one culture and its associated language, into another culture and ITS associated language. Hebrew thought and Greek thought were then, and remains to this day, miles apart. And, there are many words and thoughts in Hebrew that have no parallel in Greek. So, something close, or at least similar, had to be chosen.

This problem is even more troublesome with the NT; because the oldest NT documents we possess are all written in Greek. Yet, it is obvious and unchallenged that the writers of the NT were Jews; they were Jews thoroughly immersed in Hebrew culture and Hebrew thought. We can compare the ancient Greek Septuagint against the ancient Hebrew OT and fairly easily find where the translation problems lay; but it is somewhat different for the N.T., because we have relatively few passages of N.T. writings that were written down in Hebrew at some point or another; and all of those appear to have been taken from the Greek, not the other way around. Recently, though, a group of Jewish scholars HAVE written a complete Hebrew NT, using the tremendous leaps in understanding of Hebrew culture in the days of Yeshua, that also gives us a better understanding of the 1st century Church. This Bible is written by the Bible Society of Israel, and it is a fully

parallel OT *and* NT in English and Hebrew.....a very valuable tool for any serious student of the Bible.

Now, the translation problem is further multiplied when you take a Hebrew thought, try to write it in a foreign language, like Greek; and then take the Greek and further translate it into yet another language, like English. Even more, over time, words within a particular language can take on different meanings. What an English word meant when the first King James Bible was written, as compared to today, can be quite different. Here's the thing: understand that the mere translation of a document *is by its very nature* a redaction, an editing. Simply translating the Hebrew to Greek and then the Greek to English, adds in variations. Why else do you suppose we have the absolutely endless series of what we call *Bible versions* in English that we have today? And, don't forget, the Bible has also been translated, now, into literally hundreds of other languages, and a substantial amount of those FROM the English!

Let me give you a little help tip for studying the Bible.....especially the NT.....for those of you who are serious Bible students. Something that few Christian scholars will tell you about, and even fewer actually do to any great extent: and that is to compare the writings of many NT verses with their OT counterparts. Does that sound odd? What verses of the Old might be in the New? Remember, the NT consists, at least 50%, of direct OT quotations. A good study bible will show you exactly which NT verses are but OT quotations, and even tell you which book, chapter, and verses of the OT are being brought forward into the NT section you are reading.

Don't just take mental note that that NT verse or paragraph is an OT quotation: stop, look up that OT passage, and read it. Mentally insert that OT portion, just as it reads in the OT, into the NT. Depending on your Bible version, more often than not the supposed OT words written in the NT will NOT actually be the same as those written in the same OT passage. Let that sink in for just a moment. Why, if the translator fully recognizes that what is being said is simply a direct quote from the OT, don't the words have an exact match? Often it is because the OT is being translated from Hebrew documents into English, while the NT is being translated from Greek documents into English. And, the Greek meaning often is a couple of degrees off course from the Hebrew meaning; add in FURTHER translation from Greek to English and Hebrew to English, and it complicates the issue even further.

But, frustratingly, there is more. Every Christian denomination today, of which there are nearly 3000, has a set of doctrines and a creed that each goes by; and in general, the Bible translators, either consciously or sub-consciously, adheres to the doctrines and creed of one or another of these denominations. So, when the opportunity comes to translate a word, often when what is written in the original doesn't seem to match their preconceived doctrines, they will substitute a word or phrase that is out of context, but which keeps the meaning of the verse within the boundaries of the beliefs that they hold dear. So, translation often has some agenda buried deep within it. This is why it is so necessary to use several versions to study from, and better yet, gain an understanding of Hebrew language and culture. I recommend that everyone have a Hebrew Bible to correlate the English translation with, because even if you don't have any proficiency in Hebrew, you can rather easily tell when two words in Hebrew are similar, but might have two very distant English words used to translate that same Hebrew word. Then, one

should be suspicious, and do a thorough Hebrew word study to see exactly what that word means to the Hebrew mind.

PLEASE understand this: the Bible was not written in a vacuum. All the thoughts and phrases and word meanings were within the context of the Hebrew culture of that era. Our goal, then, is to find out what those words meant to the original authors; because they should be taken to mean exactly the same thing for us. Otherwise, we turn the Bible into a living document; that is, one which is made to evolve with the times.

Now, I'm not issuing any condemnations. I'm simply pointing out that a) there is much more variation in the NT writings among the various translations than for the OT, and b) this is primarily because the NT is where the various Christians doctrines find their foundation, and where doctrinal arguments are made for defending or criticizing any particular denomination's beliefs.

Thankfully, over the last 20 years, with many Jewish scholars either coming to belief in Messiah or at least having a more open approach to studying and considering the NT, some great work is being done in adjusting the NT translations so as to be in line with the Hebrew culture and thought patterns of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. Even more, with the discovery of what is usually called the Community documents of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we are finding that an astounding number of phrases and theology in the NT that we, up to now, thought was brand new or unique with Jesus and His disciples, in fact these theologies were already under development, and the phrases already in use, with the Essene separatists out in the wilderness of Judah.

So, as I try to connect the Torah and the NT for you at times, I'm also going to occasionally try to correlate some of the Dead Sea Documents with it as well, so as to better help us understand what certain things meant to the minds of the NT authors, and what certain words and phrases meant to the vast audiences Jesus spoke to. And, that is more possible within the last 10 – 15 years than ever before in history.

And, let me assure you, you have nothing to fear. Your faith in Christ will grow and be even further validated as we study Torah and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Some of the mysterious and confusing things of the NT that we have so much difficulty understanding often become more clear and understandable and *real* with the help of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the comparison with the OT.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Torahclass.com/index.html](http://Torahclass.com/index.html), Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

**Theme:** Kings of the east capture Sodom and Gomorrah; Abraham delivers Lot; Abraham refuses booty.

This section records the first war mentioned in the Bible, and it would not be included here had it not involved Abraham. The Bible records a great deal of history; but, as Dr. A.T. Pierson said, “History is His story.” What is written helps us better understand how God worked out His great plan of salvation in this world. In the Bible, historical facts are often windows for spiritual truth.<sup>2</sup>

The record of the battle of the four kings against the five is interesting, for it is part of the outworking of God’s promise to make Abram great and to bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him (12:3). Chapter 14 describes a typical “international” skirmish in the ancient world in which powerful nations formed a coalition to plunder and subjugate areas near the border of the land promised to Abram.

### **Genesis 14:1**

**And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations;**

The kings of the East have remained stubbornly obscure despite numerous attempts to link them to historically known figures, though the geographical areas they represent can be identified with some confidence.

**[Amraphel]** The Chaldee Targum of Onkelos makes Amraphel king of Babylon, others make him king of Assyria; some make him the same as Nimrod, and others, one of his descendants. Thought by some to be Hammurabi, king of Babylon, who was a celebrated warrior, builder, and lawgiver of the famous Babylonian Code of Laws regulating courts of justice and daily life of his subjects. See Death Penalties in the Code of Hammurabi.

**[Shinar]** Shinar refers elsewhere in the Bible to the southern Mesopotamian plains known in earliest times as Sumer and later connected to Babylonia.

**[Ellasar]** corresponds to an ancient way of referring to Assyria (a.la<sub>5</sub>.sar).

**[Chedorlaomer]** This king seems to have been the overlord of the others who were allies with him in the war with the kings of Genesis 14:2, who had served Chedorlaomer for twelve years before their rebellion against him (Genesis 14:4). Arioch was his sister's son, and Tidal was king of barbarian tribes of the Kurdish mountains.

**[Elam]** is the usual name for the region, which in this period comprised the whole of the land east of Mesopotamia from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf (modern Iran).

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<sup>2</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1991). *Be obedient* (Ge 14:1). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

**Nachmanides:** “*And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar – this is Babylon; Arioch king of Ellasar – this is Media; Chedorlaomer king of Elam – this is Greece; And Tidal king of Goiim – this is that kingdom (Rome) which writes out a levy [and collects assessment] from all nations of the world.*”<sup>3</sup>

**Torah Class:** There is WAY more to this chapter than meets the eye. We are entering some really meaty parts of the Torah that sets the stage for the future.

The area where Lot had gone to live, the Jordan Valley, extending all the way to the Dead Sea, and including the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, was in essence part of a district controlled by a king named Chedorlaomer; and Chedorlaomer apparently had some type of mutual protection treaty with this small group of nations and kings mentioned in the outset of verse 1. Now, the names of these various kingdoms listed here cannot all be translated into a specific area on a modern map, but some can. The place called Ellasar is almost for sure Ashur, one of several ancient cities built by Nimrod, and which eventually was called Assyria. Amraphel, one of the kings that allied with Chedorlaomer, lived way up north, in an area called Shinar....the same place Nimrod had called home, and also where Ur.....Abraham’s home town...was located.

The place called Elam, which was Chedorlaomer’s kingdom.....or better, city-state.....is also known by another biblical name, Shushan (which we find in the book of Esther). Today, it is called by yet another name, Khuzistan. Remember, we’re going to find many names for people and places in the Bible, that change over the centuries; both as a result of changing languages and of the changing hands of a city to a rival king or empire. Elam, Shushan, and Khuzistan are all the same place; and in modern times, this place is located in southwestern Iran just a few miles from Ur.....so Shinar and Elam likely shared a border.

King Tidal is known to be a king of the Hittites, so his territory that is called “Goyim” covered the areas of Western Turkey and Syria. Those of you who have studied a little Hebrew know that the Hebrew word goyim means “nations” and it also means “gentiles”. Prior to Abraham, goyim was a very generic word-meaning nation in a very general sense.....just like we use the word “nation” today. But, once God separated Abraham, and then designated him as the first “Hebrew” which set him apart as a SPECIAL and UNIQUE nation of people set-apart for God’s purpose, the word goyim took on a slightly different tone. It then meant “all the other nations and peoples of the world except for Abraham and his people”. So, by about 1900 BC, goyim meant “gentile nations” or “gentile people”. Here, in Genesis 14, it is very likely that whoever was the last person to redact this chapter of Genesis in antiquity, was simply showing that in the original Scriptural documents the kingdom that King Tidal reigned over was not written down and named, so he simply inserted the rather generic word “goyim”, indicating that Tidal was indeed a king of some nation or another.

It is through fairly new archeological evidence that we now know with certainty that King Tidal was ruled over a people called the Hittites. And, BTW, the Hittites were an enormous, dominant, and very advanced culture of that era. I suspect that when Genesis was first written down, it was not all necessary to explain what people King Tidal ruled over; anymore than it would need to be explained today, to most any literate culture in

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<sup>3</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chabvel, Shilo Publishing

the modern world, what nation President Bush is president over.....it is simply common knowledge.<sup>4</sup>

### **Genesis 14:2**

**That these 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, which is Zoar.**

[war] First war on record. This may not have been the first war, however is the first mentioned. Many others are mentioned after this war. Wars are predicted to continue until Christ comes to earth (Matthew 24:4-21; Rev. 6:1-8; Rev. 13:4-8; Rev. 19:11-21).

**Nachmanides:** “*And the king of Bela*” The reason [why Scripture does not mention his name as it does with the kings of Sodom, et al], is that he ruled over a small city with few men in it and he had no generally recognized reputation.<sup>5</sup>

### **Genesis 14:3**

**All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea.**

[salt sea] Called "the salt sea" (Genesis 14:3; Numbers 34:12; Deut. 3:17; Joshua 3:16; Joshua 12:3; Joshua 15:2,5; Joshua 18:19); "the sea of the plain" (Deut. 3:17; Deut. 4:49; Joshua 3:16); "the east sea" (Joel 2:20); and "the former sea" (Zech. 14:8).

The “Valley of Siddim” is the area around the Dead Sea, which historically is thought to have yielded much asphalt (cf. v. 10).<sup>6</sup>

### **Genesis 14:4**

**Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.**

#### **The Battle of 9 Kings**

##### **Shemites**

Amraphel, king of Shinar  
Arioch, king of Ellasar  
Chedorlaomer, king of Elam  
Tidal, king of nations;

##### **Hamites**

Bera, king of Sodom  
Birsha, king of Gomorrah  
Shinab, king of Admah  
Shemeber, king of Zeboiim  
King of Bela (Zoar)

- Served Chedorlaomer 12 years; 13th year rebelled.
- Chedorlaomer defeated and spoiled the rebels.
- Took Lot, Abram’s nephew, captive from Sodom.

<sup>4</sup> Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

<sup>5</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chabvel, Shilo Publishing

<sup>6</sup> Believers Study Bible Notes

In an effort to put down a rebellion (v. 4), four powerful Eastern kings invaded the Jordan Valley near the Salt Sea, that is, the Dead Sea (v. 3), defeating all the forces in the region (vv. 5-7), plundering the five Jordanian kings (vv. 8-11), and taking Lot captive (v. 12).

**Torah Class:** The common element among the territories of these allied kings who were going to come down into the Middle East and make war, is that they were ALL in what we call Mesopotamia, and the territories they held were substantial.

This district that had rebelled had its own rulers, and we are given their names: Bera, Birsha, Shinab, Shem-eber, and unnamed ruler of Zoar; we're told that they had paid tribute to K'dorla'omer for 12 years as part of a peace treaty. Every one of these minor kings ruled over relatively small armies and very limited areas as compared to those 4 Mesopotamian kings. In the 13<sup>th</sup> year since the making of the treaty these rulers rebelled..... which simply means they grew tired of paying tribute to these absentee landlords up in Mesopotamia, and refused to pay any more. So, a year later, K'dorla'omer and his allies marched south and attacked the rebelling district.<sup>7</sup>

### **Genesis 14:5**

**And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim,**

**[Rephaims in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim]** The Rephaims, Zuzims, Emims, and others of Genesis 14:5-7 were of the greatest giant tribes (Deut. 2:10-11,20-21; Deut. 3:11-13; Joshua 12:4; Joshua 13:12; Joshua 15:8; Joshua 17:15; Joshua 18:16).

**[Rephaims]** = Nephilim – Genesis 6

**Torah Class:** Now, the people called Rephaim, Zuzim, and Emim are difficult to identify. Several lessons ago, we talked about the Nephilim.....that race of giants, or powerful and tyrannical men spoken of before the Flood. They were supposedly the result of fallen angels mating with human females. It is thought by many sages that the Rephaim, Zuzim, and Emim may well be a kind of Nephilim, post Flood. They don't seem to be known anywhere as a tribe, so this appears to be more of a description, and their names reflect the language and cultural of the region each is found in. But, this is conjecture; it is not at all clear who these 3 groups of people were. The other names mentioned....like the Horites, Amelikites, and Amorites are well attested to ancient Middle Eastern tribes.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

<sup>8</sup> Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

### **Genesis 14:6**

**And the Horites in their mount Seir, unto Elparan, which is by the wilderness.**

### **Genesis 14:7**

**And they returned, and came to Enmishpat, which is Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazezontamar.**

[**Hazezon-tamar**] Ancient name of Engedi in Syria. It was sizable when Hebron was built (2 Chron. 20:2).

**Rashi:** “Amalek, it is true, was not yet born, but it is so named here because of the name it would bear in the future.”<sup>9</sup>

**Bereshith Rabbah:** Amalek was not yet born and yet you say, “All the country of the Amalekites!” However, the Torah declares the end from the beginning.” This method of d’rash of the Sages is found in many places. Concerning the rivers of the garden of Eden they also made a similar statement.<sup>10</sup>

**Nachmanides:** The correct interpretation concerning “the country of the Amalekites” mentioned here is that there was in ancient times some honorable person of the sons of the Horites, the inhabitants of the land, by the name of Amalek, who reuled over this place. Eliphaz, Esau’s firstborn, named his son after this man. Perhaps this Amalek mentioned here was of the family of Timna, his mother, and he also ruled in that place and was chieftain over them.<sup>11</sup>

### **Genesis 14:8**

**And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim;**

**The itinerary and conquests of the kings of the East.** The itinerary of conquest is given as is common in chronographic texts. The route goes from north to south along what is known as the King’s Highway, the major north-south artery in Transjordan, just east of the Jordan Valley. Ashtaroth, neighboring the capital later called Karnaim, was the capital of the region just east of the Sea of Galilee inhabited by the Rephaim. Virtually nothing is known of these peoples, or of the Zuzites and Emites, though all of them are identified with the giants of the land at the time of the conquest under Joshua (cf. Deut. 2). The next stop was Ham in northern Gilead. Shaveh, also known as Kiriathaim, was in Reubenite territory when the land was divided among the tribes and bordered on the Moabite region. The Horites were the people living in the region later known as Edom,

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<sup>9</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chabvel, Shilo Publishing

<sup>10</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chabvel, Shilo Publishing

<sup>11</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chabvel, Shilo Publishing

the next region south. After reaching the area of the gulf of Aqaba (the town of El Paran=Elath?), the invaders turn northwest to confront the Amalekites in the region of Kadesh Barnea (at that time called En Mishpat) and the Amorites in the southern hill country. This route then brings them around to the cities of the plain in the region south and east of the Dead Sea. The towns of Sodom and Gomorrah have not been located with any certainty, though some think that their remains are beneath part of the Dead Sea (see comments on Genesis 19). After the battle in the Valley of Siddim, the four kings traveled along the west side of the Jordan and got as far as Dan, in the very north of the land of Canaan, before being overtaken by Abraham and his men.

**[vale of Siddim]** A valley full of bitumen pits, which was later submerged under the waters of the Dead Sea when Sodom was destroyed by God.

**Torah Class:** The allied armies met-up in the valley of Siddim; a valley that no longer exists because it is now part of the Dead Sea. Here is one of those places in the Bible where redaction took place. Because WHEN this event happened and was written down, the valley of Siddim DID exist. Later, when a Bible copier was copying the text, he added the words “now the Dead Sea”. Otherwise, nobody would have known what or where the now inundated Siddim Valley was. Even more, the words that editor ACTUALLY wrote was not “DEAD sea”, but “SALT sea”. Even later yet, when the name Salt Sea fell out of use and became known as the Dead Sea, the Bible copiers naturally began using Dead Sea instead of Salt Sea. As you can understand, NONE of this represents substantive changes, nor does it change the location or meaning. All it does is clarify and bring forward facts that would otherwise have become obscure and lost. This is the most typical kind of Biblical redaction.

For you geography buffs, you might also like to know that the Dead Sea is basically two parts: the northern and the southern. The northern is what existed in Abraham’s day; it was very deep....some 1300 feet. The southern part did not exist until after Abraham’s time, and was the result of the northern part filling up, and then overflowing into the Valley of Siddim that was adjacent and to the South. So, the Valley of Siddim became filled up with water, and simply became a relatively shallow part of the newly expanded Dead Sea.

The route that the kings from Mesopotamia took was the already well-marked “King’s Highway” extending from Damascus in the North, eventually all the way to Egypt. They attacked and defeated the Rephaim at a place called Ashteroth-Karnaim, the Zuzim at Ham (not sure just where that is), the Emim at Shaveh-Kirathaim, and finally far to the south, the Horites in the area of Seir. Then later, then they headed back north and defeated the Amelikites at Kadesh, which is also called En-Mishpat.

When the rebellious kings knew they had to react to the armies that were nearing to them, they gathered together and met the armies of King Chedorlaomer in the Valley of Siddim. So, without going into detail, the various rulers of this rebellious district came out to battle against K’dorla’omer and his men, and they got creamed as one might have expected. K’dorla’omer’s allied army took all the district’s food supply, their possessions of value, and even some people to use as slaves..... this was normal battle protocol in those days. Among those taken as slaves were Lot and his family, who were living in

Sodom when the attack came.<sup>12</sup>

**Chrysostom; An Example of Valor:** Let us not idly pass these words by, dearly beloved, or consider the account to be of no value. It was of set purpose that sacred Scripture recounted everything to us with precision so that we should learn the might of these barbarians and the degree of valor they displayed and with how much ferocity they involved themselves in war so as to clash even with the giants – that is, men powerful in bodily stature – and put to flight all the peoples dwelling there. You see, just as a swollen torrent sweeps away everything in its path and destroys it, in the same way the barbarians fell on these peoples and destroyed them completely with the result that they put to flight the rulers of the Amalekites and all the others. But perhaps someone may say, “What good is it for me to know about the might of the barbarians?” It was not idly or to no purpose that Scripture mixed the matters in with its account. Nor is it without point that we are now bringing it to your attention and directing you in turn to recall their valor. Rather, our purpose is that from the ensuing instruction you may learn the extraordinary degree of God’s power and also the patriarch’s virtue.<sup>13</sup>

**Ambrose; Senses:** For those four kings who defeated the five kings and took captive the whole cavalry of the Sodomites, captured Lot the son of Abraham’s brother as well and went on their way. The five kings are our five bodily senses: sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing. The four kings are the seductions of the body and of the world, because human flesh and the world are composed of four elements.<sup>14</sup>

### **Genesis 14:9**

**With Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings with five.**

### **Genesis 14:10**

**And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain.**

[slimepits] = bitumen; tar. (Oil!) Tar pits are common in this area that is so rich in bitumen that large amounts bubble to the surface and even float on the Dead Sea. The word translated “pits” is the same word used for wells of water throughout the Old Testament and therefore generally refers to a spot that has been dug out.

The Hebrew term for pits is written twice (“pits pits”), meaning that bitumen pits were everywhere.

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<sup>12</sup> [Torahclass.com/index.html](http://Torahclass.com/index.html), Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

<sup>13</sup> Ancient Christian commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

<sup>14</sup> Ancient Christian commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

[**fell there**] The Valley of Siddim, then, had many pits that had been dug to extract bitumen, and these provided refuge for the kings (they “lowered themselves into them” rather than “they fell into them”).

### **Genesis 14:11**

**And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.**

Certainly five kings ought to be able to defeat four kings, especially when they are fighting “on their own turf.” But the army of the cities of the plain was soundly defeated by the invading kings! Apparently the five kings did not even know their own land because they were trapped in the slime pits (14:10). All their army could do was flee for the hills.

While reviewing his troops, the Duke of Wellington is supposed to have said, “I don’t know what effect these men will have on the enemy, but they frighten *me!*” Ezekiel 16:49–50 suggests that the lifestyle of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah did not prepare them for conflict. (Cf. Ezek. 16:49–50 with 1 John 2:15–17.)<sup>15</sup>

### **Genesis 14:12**

**And they took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.**

[**Abram’s brother’s son**] Lot’s son, = Abram’s nephew compared to verse 14 Lot is referred to as Abram’s brother. This is an interesting use of words and may have reference to Christian family, or Christian brothers and sisters, in the body of Christ.

**Pink writes:** “It is beautiful to observe the effect of this intelligence upon our patriarch. Abram was not indifferent to his nephew’s well-being. There was no root of bitterness in him. There was no callous, “Well, this is none of my doing: he must reap what he has sown.” Promptly he goes to the aid of the one in distress. But note it was not in the energy of the flesh that he acted. It was no mere tie of nature that prompted Abram here—“When Abram heard that his brother (not his ‘nephew’) was taken captive.” A *brother*—a spiritual brother—was in need, and so he “armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan” (14:14). And has this no voice for us today? Surely the spiritual application is obvious. How often is a “brother” taken captive by the enemy, and the word comes, “Ye, which are spiritual *restore such an one* in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). But only too often the call falls upon ears that are dull of hearing. Only too often, our prided separation from evil leads to independence and indifference. Alas! that it should be so. How different from our blessed Lord, who leaves the ninety

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<sup>15</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1991). *Be obedient* (Ge 14:1). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

and nine and goes after the sheep that has strayed, and rests not until it is found and restored!”<sup>16</sup>

Whatever purposes the kings may have had in this war, God had something special in mind for Lot: he became a prisoner of war. Lot had *looked at* Sodom and *moved toward* Sodom (Gen. 13:10–13), and now he was *living in* Sodom (14:12; see Ps. 1:1). You might not guess it from his conduct, but Lot was a righteous man (2 Peter 2:6–8). Where did he fail?

While in Egypt with Abraham, Lot had gotten a taste of the world and enjoyed it. Scripture doesn't record that Lot ever built an altar and sought the Lord, as did his uncle Abraham. Abraham was the friend of God (James 2:23), but Lot was the friend of the world (4:4). In time, Lot conformed to the world (Rom. 12:2); and when Sodom lost the war, Lot was condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:32). If you identify with the world, then expect to suffer what the world suffers.

Lot's capture was God's way of disciplining him and reminding him that he had no business living in Sodom. No doubt Abraham was praying faithfully for his nephew that he might separate himself from the world and start living like a true “stranger and pilgrim.” God disciplines His children because He loves them and wants the best for them (Prov. 3:11–12; Heb. 12:1–11). If we don't listen to His rebukes, then He has to get our attention some other way; and that way is usually very painful.<sup>17</sup>

**Chrysostom; Division Is A Great Evil:** Notice that what I said yesterday has come to be true, that Lot, far from being better off for his choice of the better parts, rather had learned from experience not to set his heart on the better parts. You see, not only did no benefit come to him from it, but indeed he was even led away into captivity. He learned the lesson through experience that it was much better for him to enjoy the just man's company than to be parted from him and undergo these great trials even if living independently. I mean, he parted from the patriarch and thought he enjoyed greater independence, had the good fortune to enjoy the better parts and experience great prosperity – and all of a sudden he becomes a captive, dispossessed, without hearth or home. The purpose was for you to learn what a great evil division is and what a great good harmony is, and that we ought not hanker after pride of place but love to take second place instead. “*Now, they seized Lot and his accoutrements,*” the text says, remember. How much better was it to be in the company of the patriarch and accept everything for the sake of not sundering the mutual harmony than be separated and while choosing the better parts be immediately beset with such awful perils and fall into the clutches of barbarians?<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Pink, A. W. (2005). *Gleanings in Genesis* (Page 158). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>17</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1991). *Be obedient* (Ge 14:1). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

<sup>18</sup> Ancient Christian commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

### **Genesis 14:13**

**And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.**

[**Hebrew**] First mention of the word “Hebrew” = “crossed over.” from *eber* (H5676), meaning “across,” or “the opposite side.” It refers to the other side of the Euphrates in this case. The word is used of Abraham's descendants (Genesis 14:13; Genesis 39:14,17; Genesis 41:12; Exodus 1:15-19; Exodus 2:7-11; Exodus 21:2; Deut. 15:12; Jeremiah 34:9-14; Jonah 1:9; Acts 6:1; 2 Cor. 11:22; Phil. 3:5).

It is supposed by many that he got this name from Eber or Heber, son of Salah; see Genesis 11:15. But why he should get a name from Heber, rather than from his own father, or some other of his progenitors, no person has yet been able to discover. We may, therefore, safely conclude that he bears the appellation of Hebrew or Ibrite from the above circumstance, and not from one of his progenitors, of whom we know nothing but the name, and who preceded Abram not less than six generations; and during the whole of that time till the time marked here, none of his descendants were ever called Hebrews; this is a demonstration that Abram was not called the Hebrew from Heber; see Genesis 11:15-27.

Abram is referred to as “Abram the Hebrew.” Typically the designation “Hebrew” in early times was used only as a point of reference for foreigners. Besides the use here, it is used to identify Joseph in Egypt (e.g., Genesis 39:14-17), the Israelite slaves in reference to the Egyptian masters (Exodus 2:11), Jonah to the sailors (Jonah 1:9), the Israelites to the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:6), and other such situations. Some have thought that “Hebrew” is not in these cases an ethnic reference but a designation of a social class of people known as the “Habiru” in many ancient texts, where they are typically dispossessed peoples. Though the term “Hebrew” is not to be equated with the later group of marauding soldiers known as the “Habiru,” it may be etymologically related. In fact Abram’s military activity in this chapter shows that this meaningful designation fits

[**Amorite**] Descendants of one of the sons of Canaan (Genesis 10:16). Most powerful of the Canaanite nations. They were to be dispossessed by Abraham's descendants (Genesis 15:16-21). Here they were confederate with him (Genesis 14:13). They were the first people to be dispossessed by Israel when coming out of Egypt (Numbers 21:21-35; Deut. 3:1-17; cp. Joshua 11).

### **Genesis 14:14**

**And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.**

[**trained**] or, “instructed.” *chaniyk*, (H2593), *kaw-neeek'*; from (H2596) *chanak*; initiated; i.e. practised :- trained. Should Christians be prepared for battle?

Here we discover that Abram has a household of significant size (318 recruits or retainers). The word used to describe these men occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament, but does occur in an Akkadian letter of the fifteenth century B.C. Whether Abram is placed within the early part of the Middle Bronze Age, when the area was predominantly occupied by herdsman and villagers, or within the later Middle Bronze Age when there were more fortified settlements, this army would have been a match for any other armed force in the region. Even as late as the Amarna period the armies of any particular city state would not have been much larger.

This is startling, and it reveals something of the extent of Abram's possessions. This gives you some conception of the number of servants Abram had. In his own household, he could arm 318. How many did he have that he could not arm? For instance, there would also be women and children and the old folk—but he could arm 318. To have that many hired hands indicates that Abram was carrying on quite a business of raising cattle and sheep.

**[Dan]** It marked Israel's northern limit (Judges 20:1; 2 Samuel 3:10; 2 Samuel 17:11; 2 Samuel 24:2,15; 2 Chron. 30:5). Originally called Laish (Judges 18:7,29). Here Jeroboam set up an idol (1 Kings 12:28-29).

If this is the Dan in the northern part of Palestine, then the records do not indicate anything of its existence prior to the time that the tribe of Dan settled there, several hundred years after Abram (cf. Judg. 17; 18). However, scribes may have intermittently updated the names of communities, special sites, and cities, which would explain this as scribal efficiency and not error.

**Torah Class:** Abraham hears Lot has been kidnapped, and immediately takes 318 of his men, out of his own household, and sets out to rescue Lot. At the time Abraham got the news of this, he was living among some of the Canaanite peoples, with whom he had apparently entered into a formal alliance by means of treaty. But, he elected NOT to use any of these Canaanites to help him; rather the 318 men he took with him were men loyal to Abraham, since many had been born into his clan, and they had been trained in warfare. This gives us some idea of the size of nation or people Abraham had become in a rather short period of time. BTW: this doesn't mean that Abraham was the biological father of all these men. Almost certainly these were the children of many servants and slaves. People purchased as slaves, of which Abraham owned many, were considered part of the family. Because of the familiar history of the brutal and ungodly African slave trade that supplied so many of the field workers in early America, we get a very distorted idea of what slavery among the Biblical Hebrews amounted to. Slavery among the Hebrews was not that far from modern day adoption, where someone often pays a mother for the right to adopt her child, or at least pays for all her medical expenses during pregnancy and delivery, plus a stipend. So, even though direct children of Abraham certainly had authority and rights of inheritance above these slaves and the children born to these slaves, slaves were not maltreated; they were usually valuable and beloved members of the clan, and generally given respect and love.

Abraham and his warriors pursue these kings all the way to what would eventually become known as Damascus, Syria..... a long way. Notice that verse 14 says they went as far as the region of “Dan”. Here is another redaction; because Dan was named after one of the sons of Jacob....one of the 12 tribes of Israel. Jacob was an eventual grandson of Abraham, Dan an eventual son of Jacob, and the land called Dan an eventual location of the tribe of Dan after the Exodus. So, the area called Dan, here, could not possibly been named that for at least 600 years *after* this story of Abraham rescuing Lot occurred.<sup>19</sup>

It is beautiful to observe the effect of this intelligence upon our patriarch. Abram was not indifferent to his nephew’s well-being. There was no root of bitterness in him. There was no callous, “Well, this is none of my doing: he must reap what he has sown.” Promptly he goes to the aid of the one in distress. But note it was not in the energy of the flesh that he acted. It was no mere tie of nature that prompted Abram here—“When Abram heard that his brother (not his ‘nephew’) was taken captive.” A *brother*—a spiritual brother—was in need, and so he “armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan” (14:14). And has this no voice for us today? Surely the spiritual application is obvious. How often is a “brother” taken captive by the enemy, and the word comes, “Ye, which are spiritual *restore such an one* in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). But only too often the call falls upon ears that are dull of hearing. Only too often, our prided separation from evil leads to independence and indifference. Alas! that it should be so. How different from our blessed Lord, who leaves the ninety and nine and goes after the sheep that has strayed, and rests not until it is found and restored!<sup>20</sup>

**Ambrose; The Value of Election:** “When Abraham learned of this, he counted his servants born in the house” and with 318 men won a victory and liberated his nephew. This shows that the separation had taken place in friendship, since Abraham’s love for his nephew was so great that he was willing to confront even the dangers of war on his behalf. What does it mean “he counted”? It means he “chose”. So too what Jesus said in the Gospel refers not only to the knowledge of God but also to the grace of the just: “Even the hairs on your head are all counted.” Indeed, “the Lord knows those who are his,” but those who are not his he does not deign to know. Abraham, then counted 318 men. You should understand that it is not numerical quantity that is here expressed but the value of their election. He chose, in fact, those whom he judged worthy to belong to the number of the faithful who were to believe in the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, the letter T in Greek means “three hundred”, and the sum IH – ten plus eight – expresses the name of Jesus. So Abraham conquered in virtue of faith, not through the strength of a numerous army.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> [Torahclass.com/index.html](http://Torahclass.com/index.html), Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

<sup>20</sup> Pink, A. W. (2005). *Gleanings in Genesis* (158). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>21</sup> Ancient Christian commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

### **Genesis 14:15**

**And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.**

**Battle tactics.** Abram caught up to the eastern army at the northern border of the land, Dan. Abram uses the strategy of nighttime ambush, which is attested in texts as early as the Judges period in Egyptian as well as in Hittite documents.

Hearing of the invasion and of the capture of Lot, Abram mustered his 318 trained men and together with his allies (v. 13) pursued and defeated the invaders in a night attack. He pursued them all the way to Dan, the future northern border of the Promised Land (140 miles from Abram's home in Hebron). Dan was then named Leshem (Josh. 19:47) or Laish (Judges 18:29). During the night Abram pursued them on to Hobah, another 100 miles north of Dan, and brought back... Lot and his possessions and family and other captives. This was a striking victory for the patriarch over four leading kings who had previously conquered such an extensive portion of Transjordan and the area south of the Dead Sea.

**[left hand of Damascus]** A place sixty miles northwest of Damascus.

**[Damascus]** Capital of Syria (2 Samuel 8:5; 1 Kings 11:24; 1 Kings 15:18-20; 1 Kings 20:1; 2 Kings 8:28; 2 Kings 10:33; 2 Kings 12:17; 2 Kings 13:3,24; 2 Kings 14:28; 2 Kings 16:5-9). One of the oldest cities in the world. Tradition says it was built by Abraham or his steward (Genesis 15:2).

### **Genesis 14:16**

**And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.**

Abram was the general, and the victory was attributed to him (v. 17). But this does not fully explain the triumph. Later Melchizedek attributed the victory to God as part of God's blessing on the patriarch (v. 20). God was working through the life of Abram in accord with His promise. When invaders plundered the land and stole his troublesome relative, Abram instinctively sprang into action.

**[the women also]** Abraham attacked so quickly that all the wives and daughters were rescued from the licentiousness of the victorious soldiers. In addition to Lot, the females, captives, and material goods were all rescued.

You see that they were taking the women and the other people as slaves. Abram has done a tremendous thing, and he has done it because of his nephew Lot. That is the reason all of this is mentioned here. This is very definitely not an extraneous chapter. It is a part of the life of Abram, and it is very important.

**Torah Class:** After Abraham and his men pull-off a surprise attack, at night, on K'dorla'omer's exhausted army, and achieve victory, all the booty is recovered and Lot and his family are freed; and upon their return Abraham and his men are given a rousing greeting by the grateful rulers (those kings of the district) and the residents of the now restored district who got most of their stuff back.<sup>22</sup>

**Be Obedient: Abraham the warrior (Gen. 14:13–16)**

*His attitude.* Abraham did not get involved in the war until he heard that Lot had been captured, and then he began to act. *Abraham was separated, but not isolated; he was independent, but not indifferent.* In fact, he and some of the local sheiks had formed an alliance for just such emergencies (14:13). He was “Abram, the Hebrew” (14:13), which means “the outsider, the person with no secure place in society.” He was not “Abraham the hardhearted.” He was a “pilgrim and stranger” in the land, but that was no excuse for inaction.

While believers must not compromise with the unsaved in matters of spiritual walk and ministry (2 Cor. 6:14–7:1), they may cooperate when it comes to caring for humanity and “promoting the general welfare.” When you see that people are in trouble, you don't ask them for a testimony before helping them (Luke 10:25–37; Gal. 6:10). Sacrificial service is one way of showing the love of Christ to others (Matt. 5:16). If Christians don't carry their share of the common burdens of life, how can they be the salt of the earth and the light of the world?

For example, Joseph served in Egypt, and God used him to preserve his family and the Jewish nation. Nehemiah served a heathen king, yet God used the authority and resources of that king to enable Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem. Esther was a Jewess married to a Gentile ruler, and God used her to protect the Jewish people from almost certain annihilation. Daniel in Babylon never compromised his convictions, but he did assist several rulers and was greatly used by God. We may cooperate with different people at different times to achieve different purposes, but we should always be conscious of our obligation to glorify God.

Abraham treated his nephew with love, both when he gave Lot first choice of the land (Gen. 13:9) and when he risked his own life to rescue him. Lot had not been kind to Abraham, and Abraham had every excuse to let his nephew suffer the painful consequences of his own stupid decisions. But Lot was his “brother” (14:16), so Abraham practiced brotherly love and overcame evil with good (Rom. 12:17–21; Gal. 6:1–2).

*His army.* Though a man of peace, Abraham was prepared for war. He didn't fight from selfish motives to get personal gain; he fought because he loved Lot and wanted to help him. When you consider the characteristics of Abraham's army, you see what it takes in the spiritual realm to have victory over the world.

(1) *They were born in his house (v. 14).* Spiritually speaking, this reminds us that “whatever is born of God overcomes the world” (1 John 5:4, NKJV). Our first birth made us children of Adam, and he was a loser; but our second birth makes us children of God, and Jesus Christ is the Victor. He has overcome every enemy (Eph. 1:19–23), and He

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<sup>22</sup> [Torahclass.com/index.html](http://Torahclass.com/index.html), Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

shares His victory with all who will trust Him. “And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4, NKJV).

(2) *They were armed* (v. 14). It takes more than zeal and courage to win a war: You must also have effective equipment. The Christian soldier must wear the whole armor of God and use the spiritual weapons God has provided (Eph. 6:10–18). Our weapons are spiritual, not fleshly (2 Cor. 10:3–5); and we use them in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God and prayer are our two most effective weapons (Acts 6:4), and we must use them by faith. As the well-known song expresses it: “Put on the Gospel armor/Each piece put on with prayer.”

(3) *They were trained* (v. 14). No matter how good their equipment is, if the soldiers are not trained, they will be easily defeated. One of the purposes of the local church is to train God’s people how to use the Bible effectively, how to pray, how to recognize the enemy, and how to follow orders as soldiers in the army of Christ. *The better you know your Bible, the better you are equipped to fight the battle* (2 Tim. 3:16–17). The Captain of your salvation wants to train you and “make you perfect [complete]” (Heb. 13:20–21), and the Greek word means “to equip an army.” If we fail in the battle, it is not the fault of the equipment or the strategy of our Captain. Something is wrong with the soldiers.

(4) *They believed in their leader*. Abraham and his allies rode 120 miles to make a surprise attack on the four kings, and they won a complete victory. Apparently Abraham got his directions from the Lord, so the whole enterprise was a victory of faith. The spiritual application is clear: If God’s people expect to defeat their enemies, they must trust the Lord and obey His orders. This is how Joshua conquered the Promised Land and David defeated the enemies of Israel, and this is the way the church must fight today.

(5) *They were united*. There were not three armies with three leaders; there was one army, and Abraham was in charge. If God’s people today were united in love, what victories we would win! We sing, “Like a mighty army/Moves the church of God”; but the church is very unlike an army, especially when it comes to the discipline of marching together. “The trouble with the church,” said a pastor friend, “is that there are too many generals and not enough privates!”

(6) *They were single-minded*. Their goal was not personal revenge or private gain (Gen. 14:22–23), but victory over the enemy so that the captives might be freed. A double-minded soldier is destined for defeat. “No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier” (2 Tim. 2:4, NKJV). When you remember Achan (Josh. 7), Samson (Jud. 13–16), and Saul (1 Sam. 15), you see how true that statement is.

*His achievement*. Abraham and his allies were so strong that they chased the enemy for 100 miles, freed all the captives, and recovered all the spoils. Did Abraham and his worldly nephew have a long talk as they rode back? Did Lot keep the promises he made while he was in danger? Did he make any promises to Abraham?

We cannot answer those questions, but we do know this: Neither the Lord’s chastening nor the Lord’s goodness in rescuing Lot did him any good. The goodness of God should have led him to repentance (Luke 15:14–19; Rom. 2:4); but instead of repenting, Lot returned to Sodom. He could have been reunited with Abraham, but he chose to go back to sin.

“Abraham was the father of the faithful,” wrote Alexander Whyte in his classic *Bible Characters*. “And Lot, his nephew, was the father of all such as are scarcely saved.”

Some will be saved “so as by fire” (1 Cor. 3:15), but it is far better to have “an abundant entrance” into the Lord’s everlasting kingdom (2 Peter 1:11).<sup>23</sup>

**Chrysostom; Victory with Aid From On High:** Do you see why it was permitted that while the others fled Lot alone should be taken captive? For two reasons: so that the patriarch’s virtue should become manifest and that on his account many others also might find deliverance.

### **Genesis 14:17**

**And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king’s dale.**

### **Genesis 14:18**

**And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.**

#### **Melchizedek—a Type of Christ**

Many unscriptural interpretations have been given about Melchizedek; but the simple facts of the Bible give a clear understanding (see Melchizedek). The person, order and duration of the Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthoods are contrasted. In His sacrificial work Christ followed the Aaronic which was merely the shadow of His sacrifice (Hebrews 8:1-10:19). Melchizedek typifies Christ in seven ways:

1. Genealogy (Hebrews 7:3,6 compared with Micah 5:2)
2. Sacrifice (Genesis 14:18 compared with Luke 22:14-30)
3. Endless priesthood (Psalm 110 compared with Hebrews 5:10; Hebrews 6:20; Hebrews 7:3,17,21,23-28)
4. King-priest (Hebrews 7:1 compared with Zech. 6:12-13)
5. Greater than Abraham (Hebrews 7:4-8 compared with John 8:55-59)
6. King of righteousness (Hebrews 7:2 compared with 1 Cor. 1:30; Hebrews 1:8)
7. King of peace (Hebrews 7:2 compared with Isaiah 9:6)<sup>24</sup>

Melchizedek may be his title and not his name.

“Melchizedek,” meaning “my king is righteousness,” is described as the “king of Salem,” i.e., the “king of peace.” The appearance of Melchizedek, a worshiper and even priest of “God Most High” (cf. Ps 78:35), is unexplained. No parentage or lineage, beginning or end is mentioned. He is taken, then, as a type of the priesthood of Christ (Heb 7:1-10),

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<sup>23</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1991). *Be obedient* (Ge 14:13). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

<sup>24</sup>Dakes Study Bible

whose priesthood is not connected with Aaron. Some even suppose Melchizedek to have been an appearance of the preincarnate Christ.<sup>25</sup>

**[Salem]** The name of ancient Jerusalem (Genesis 14:18; Psalm 76:2; Psalm 122:3; Hebrews 7:1-2). It is said that seven hundred years before Rome was founded, the Jebusites conquered Salem and called it Jebus. Later the two names were united into one—Jerusalem, meaning "habitation of peace." The city is mentioned 809 times in Scripture by this name, beginning with Joshua 10:1 and ending with Galatians 4:25. The only other places the name is used in Scripture it refers to the New and Heavenly Jerusalem (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22; Rev. 3:12; Rev. 21:2,10). Earthly Jerusalem has undergone thirty sieges, of which twelve are recorded in Scripture. It was the capital of Israel from David's time until Nebuchadnezzar (2 Samuel 5-2 Chron. 36), and became the capital of restored Israel in the day of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 1:2-Neh. 13:20). It was totally destroyed in A.D. 70 when Israel was scattered among the nations the second time (Luke 21:20-24). It will become the capital of modern Israel before the days of Antichrist when he will conquer Israel and make Jerusalem his capital for the last three and a half years of this age (Rev. 11:1-2). It is God's chosen place for the capital of His eternal earthly kingdom under the Messiah (2 Chron. 6:6; 2 Chron. 33:4; Isaiah 2:1-4; Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 44:26; Isaiah 62:7; Jeremiah 17:25; Ezekiel 43:7; Ezekiel 48:35; Joel 3:20; Zech. 14:1-21). Jerusalem will be the center of the battle of Armageddon (Zech. 14; Rev. 19).

This is the first mention of Jerusalem in the Bible. Its existence as early as this is evidenced by the Tell el Amarna Tablets, discovered at Tell el Amarna in Egypt. These tablets are letters between the kings of Egypt in the 15th century B.C. and various rulers in Palestine and elsewhere. They throw much light on conditions in Palestine at that early time and corroborate the general picture of Canaan given in Genesis.

**[bread and wine]** First occurrence of these emblems of the Lord's Supper, showing that Melchizedek and the patriarchs may have understood the doctrine of atonement (Galatians 3:8; Hebrews 4:1-2; 1 Peter 1:10-12; cp. Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-34). Prophetically used in *Joseph's interpretations* in prison; and in the Lord's *Last Supper* for Passover, Boaz gives to Ruth,

**[priest]** This is the first use of the word priest and it proves that God has had representatives in all ages. Melchizedek was a Gentile whose priesthood is eternal in Christ (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:10; Hebrews 6:20; Hebrews 7:1-28). The Aaronic priesthood was temporary (Hebrews 7:11-12).

**[most high God]** *El* (H410) *Elyown* (H5945), First occurrence (Genesis 14:18-22). 'El signifies Strong or First. It is the title that shows God to be the Mighty One, the First Cause of everything, the possessor of the heavens and earth. It is used 245 times and is connected with some of the attributes of God as: Almighty-God (Genesis 17:1); Everlasting-God (Genesis 21:33); Jealous-God (Exodus 20:5); Great-God (Deut. 10:17);

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<sup>25</sup> Believers Study Bible Notes

Living-God (Joshua 3:10); Merciful-God (Deut. 4:31); Faithful-God (Deut. 7:9); Mighty-God (Deut. 7:21). In Deut. 32:4 it is connected with truth, justice, righteousness, and perfection. 'El-Elyown is always used to refer to the highest Sovereign of the heavens and earth (cp. Luke 1:76; Acts 17:24).

**Torah Class:** Beginning in verse 18 we are treated to a fascinating, but brief, story and meet one of the most mysterious characters in the Bible: Melchizedek, king of Shalem. In addition to being a king, we are told that Melchizedek is also a high priest, and that he worships El'Elyon.....the God Most High. Melchizedek comes out to greet Abraham, brings bread and wine and blesses Abraham, and Abraham then presents him with a tenth of everything that was recovered. So, an interesting play is set-up here: two rulers come to greet Abraham: the king of Sodom, the ruler of an evil place; and Melchizedek the ruler of a righteous place. A truly important pattern is established in this story, and as it continues on into the first verses of Chapter 15, we'll get to its significance shortly. Let's take a little time with this, for I have found that when we come across these odd scenes, it's best to look at them carefully..... for always something of great significance is occurring, and its no different here.

Who, or what, is Melchizedek? Glad you asked. The first thing to understand is that Melchizedek is not a formal or personal name, it's a title; so we're not told exactly who this person is. As an example, President Bush's name is not *president*: its George Bush. President is just the title of the office he holds. This is also true of all the so-called "names of God" that we have run into up to now in Genesis. In fact, the title used for God in this story, El Elyon..... God Most High....is also NOT a name in the way we typically think of it. But, it DOES indicate that Melchizedek is a Believer in the God of the Bible, and that he is perhaps one of the few monotheists.....those who worship only one god.....that still exist. So, none of the so-called names-of-God are actually His name: they're all titles. But, they are also something else: just like *president* is the title of the office George Bush holds, so are these various titles of God indicative of the office, the authority, that God holds. Further, we need to keep in mind that when the Bible refers to El Elyon, El Shaddai, and several more titles of god as "names".....it doesn't mean a proper NAME like Tom or Becky or Jerry. Rather, name (in Hebrew, shem) most of the time in the Bible means "reputation". So, God's name, as in reputation, are actually many; He is the God Most High, God of the Heavenly Hosts, the God Who Hides Me, the Lord Who Provides, the Lord Who Heals, and several more. It won't be until the time of Moses that God actually divulges his formal and personal name.....YHWH.....which IS like Tom or Becky or Jerry; YHWH is NOT a reputation or a title. So, as regards the TITLE Melchizedek, Melchi means "king" and "zedek" means "righteousness"..... so it's a title that, translated to English, means "my king is righteousness" or "the king of righteousness". And, it's a name in the sense of it being this unknown man's *reputation*. Now, there are precious few words spoken about this intriguing fellow. But, we need to glean as much as we can from this, because he is referred to in a powerful way in the NT, which means that even 1900 years after Abraham meets Melchizedek, apparently much more was known about him and remembered than has been written down. Melchizedek is seen by the writer of Hebrews as a very special part of Israel's history and, perhaps, Israel's spiritual future.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

**Cyprian; A Priest of the Most High God:** The order proceeds first from the sacrifice and then descends to Melchizedek, a priest of the most high God, because he offered bread, because he blessed Abraham. God who is more a priest of the most high God than our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered sacrifice to God the Father and offered the very same thing that Melchizedek had offered, bread and wine, that is, actually, his body and blood.<sup>27</sup>

**Chrysostom; Melchizedek, Like Christ, Has No Family History:** How, you ask, is it possible for a person to have no father or mother and to lack beginning of days and end of life? You heard that he was a type; well, neither marvel at this nor expect everything to be found in the type. You see, he would not be a type if he were likely to contain every feature that occurs in reality.<sup>28</sup>

**Ambrose; Abraham Became More Humble:** But one who is victorious should not claim the victory for himself; rather, he should attribute it to God. This is the teaching of Abraham, who became more humble, not more proud, in victory.<sup>29</sup>

### **Genesis 14:19**

**And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:**

### **Genesis 14:20**

**And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.**

Abraham gives Melchizedek tithes. Used by the writer of the Epistle of Hebrews to indicate that the Priestly order of Melchizedek higher (earlier) than that of Levi... (Heb 6:20). Abram apparently knew more about Melchizedek than is recorded in Scripture. Abram “gave him a tithe” of all. Thus, tithing was practiced 500 years before the Mosaic Law. Abram commenced it, Moses commanded it (Deut 12:6), and Christ Himself commended it (Luke 11:42).

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<sup>27</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

<sup>28</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

<sup>29</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

<sup>30</sup> Believers Study Bible Notes

**[blessed be the most high God]** This is the first instance of praising God in Scripture (Genesis 14:19). Compare this with the last time (Rev. 19:1-10).

**[he gave him tithes of all]** The first example of paying tithes (Genesis 14:20).

### **The Slaughter of the Kings**

- Abram's army (318 trained servants) rescues Lot, and the people of Sodom
- Melchizedek: King & Priest of Salem;
  - receives Abram's tithes (Heb 6:20).
  - Allusions (Psalm 110; Hebrews 5, 6, 7).
  - Administers Bread and Wine.

### **Melchizedek**

- "King of Righteousness";
- King of Salem (Jerusalem) & Priest of the Most High God received tithes of Abraham
- Only mention in OT (vs. Levitical Priesthood: unclean; mortal);
- Separation of Priesthood (Levi) and Kingship (Judah); cf. Heb 7:1;
- Two elements provided by Melchizedek: Bread & Wine (Cf. Lord's Supper);

### **Speculations**

- No recorded birth or death (Heb 5:7; Cf. Isa 32:17; Col 1:20; Rom 3; Ps 110);
- Was Melchizedek Shem? No: we know his genealogy (Heb 7:3);
- Was Melchizedek Christ? No: His priesthood was "after the order of" (the similitude of) Melchizedek (Heb 7:3,15);
- Was Melchizedek a celestial being? No: a man (Heb 7:4).;

### **"Type" of Christ**

- Emphasized by the writer to the Hebrews (Heb 7:11);
- King of Righteousness and Peace (Rom 3-5:1; 14:17; Isa 32:17);
  - Work of righteousness shall be peace (Rom 14:17);
  - Righteousness, peace, and joy (Col 1:20);
  - Made peace through blood of Jesus (Rom 5:1);
  - Justified by faith we have peace with God.
- vs. Adonizedek, ["Lord of Righteousness"] (Joshua 10:1-3).

### **Genesis 14:21**

**And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.**

## **Genesis 14:22**

**And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,**

**[I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth]** A mode of appealing to God and calling Him to witness any transaction. It was a way of taking a solemn oath. Compare Isaiah 62:8; Daniel 12:7; and Rev. 10:5-6. In our courts today they ask a witness to left their right hand and put their lift hand on the Bible when taking the oath.

Melchizedek is spoken of as a king of Salem, supposed to be the place afterwards called Jerusalem, and it is generally thought that he was only a man. The words of the apostle, Hebrews 7:3, state only, that the sacred history has said nothing of his ancestors. The silence of the Scriptures on this, is to raise our thoughts to Him, whose generation cannot be declared. Bread and wine were suitable refreshment for the weary followers of Abram; and it is remarkable that Christ appointed the same as the memorials of his body and blood, which are meat and drink indeed to the soul. Melchizedek blessed Abram from God. He blessed God from Abram. We ought to give thanks for other's mercies as for our own. Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, is the Mediator both of our prayers and praises, and not only offers up ours, but his own for us. Abram gave him the tenth of the spoils, Hebrews 7:4. When we have received some great mercy from God, it is very fit we should express our thankfulness by some special act of pious charity. Jesus Christ, our great Melchisedek, is to have homage done him, and to be humbly acknowledged as our King and Priest; not only the tithe of all, but all we have, must be given up to him.

*(Heb. 7:1-28) <sup>1</sup>For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; <sup>2</sup>To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; <sup>3</sup>Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. <sup>4</sup>Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. <sup>5</sup>And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: <sup>6</sup>But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. <sup>7</sup>And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. <sup>8</sup>And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. <sup>9</sup>And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes,*

*payed tithes in Abraham. <sup>10</sup>For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.*

*<sup>11</sup>If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? <sup>12</sup>For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. <sup>13</sup>For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. <sup>14</sup>For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. <sup>15</sup>And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, <sup>16</sup>Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. <sup>17</sup>For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. <sup>18</sup>For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. <sup>19</sup>For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. <sup>20</sup>And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: <sup>21</sup>(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)*  
*<sup>22</sup>By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. <sup>23</sup>And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: <sup>24</sup>But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. <sup>25</sup>Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. <sup>26</sup>For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; <sup>27</sup>Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. <sup>28</sup>For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.*

**Torah Class:** The ancient Hebrew sages and scholars had some interesting things to say about this mysterious fellow that St. Paul and others obviously relied on and believed as truth, or Melchizedek would not have been used to draw some important parallels with Yeshua HaMashiach. And, the first thing to understand is that Melchizedek was real..... he's not a symbol or a metaphor. Even Josephus, the Jewish Roman historian of Christ's

era, verified that Melchizedek was a real person. We find, for instance, that in the passages we just read, that he was king and priest over a city called Shalem. There is some evidence that BEFORE that city was called Shalem, it was called Tzedek; and that this place either was, or adjacent to, the Jerusalem that would come later.

Some of the ancient scribes said that Melchizedek was actually Shem, the son of Noach. Now, you may ask, does that mean like a 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Shem, or a Shem-like individual, or maybe even a descendant of Shem? No, these scribes meant that Melchizedek was the actual, real, literal Shem. And, that is entirely possible because Shem, by biblical records and chronologies, was still alive at this time! And, of course, Shem was to be the line of good that extended from Noach, and if ANYONE alive at this time were completely loyal to the One God, it would have been Shem, who rode out the Great Flood.<sup>31</sup>

### **Genesis 14:23**

**That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:**

**[I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet]** Whatever the original saying meant, it is clear that Abraham refused the smallest part of what belonged to another. His allies could take what was customary but he would take nothing—from a ribbon that tied a maiden's hair to a man's shoe-string—only the food that had already been eaten (Genesis 14:23-24).

### **Genesis 14:24**

**Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.**

**Nachmanides:** The king of Sodom did not ask anything of Abraham, but when he saw his generosity and righteousness in giving the tithe to the priest, then he also asked for the souls by way of charity. Abraham, trusting that he God will give him riches, possessions and honor, did not wish to take anything from him, and so he returned all the wealth of Sodom which belonged to him, and all the wealth of Gomorrah for it to be returned to its owners. The consideration above all was that they should not say that they made Abram rich. Now the other places mentioned had been destroyed by the enemy in battle; only the wealth of Sodom and Gomorrah, among the cities of the five kings, fell into the hands of the enemy because since their kings were lost in the slime pits, their cities remained defenseless.<sup>32</sup>

Israel would thus learn that God would give His Chosen People victory over enemies that plundered the Promised Land. This must have encouraged God's people in the times of

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<sup>31</sup> [Torahclass.com/index.html](http://Torahclass.com/index.html), Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

<sup>32</sup> Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chabvel, Shilo Publishing

the Judges and in later invasions. Of course faith in and obedience to God were prerequisites to victory.

In the Old Testament, warfare was actual and physical; but it was also spiritually significant in relationship to faith. According to the New Testament, a Christian's battle and weapons are spiritual, and God's promises are eternal. Using military figures of speech, Paul portrayed Christ's death as a victory (Eph. 4:8) in which He conquered sin, death, and the grave. Christ's gifts are spiritual gifts for His servants to use in service. With these spiritual gifts and armed with spiritual weapons, Christians are to champion righteousness, truth, and equity (Eph. 6:10-19). God gives His people victory over the world in accord with His promises to bless and to curse, using His servants who know His high calling and who can use the weapons of spiritual warfare with skill.

**Chrysostom; Again Abraham Fulfills the Apostolic Law:** These I will allow to take a portion, he says, since they have given evidence of deep friendship. "These" you see, the text says, "were Abram's confederates," that is, they were joined in friendship, willing to share the perils with him. Hence, with the intention of rewarding them, he is even prepared to take some portion, and in this once again he fulfills the apostolic law in the words "the worker deserves his fare." I mean he lets them take no more than their due: "except what my young men consumed and the portion for the men who accompanied me, Eschol, Aner and Mamre – they will take a portion." Do you see the precision of the patriarch's virtue? He gives evidence as well of good sense in the matter of his disregard and scorn for wealth. And at the same time [he does] everything so as not to appear to have acted from pretense or contempt and thus to have entertained grandiose notions about winning the victory.<sup>33</sup>

### **Be Obedient: Abraham the worshiper (Gen. 14:17–24)**

*A new battle.* Sometimes you face your greatest dangers after you have won a battle. It was after the capture of Jericho that Israel's self-confidence led it into defeat at Ai (Josh. 7); and after his success on Mount Carmel, Elijah panicked and ran away in fear (1 Kings 19). No wonder the saintly Scottish pastor Andrew Bonar (1810–1892) said, "Let us be as watchful after the victory as before the battle."

When Abraham returned from battle, he was met by two kings: Bera, King of Sodom ("burning"), and Melchizedek, King of Salem ("peace"). Bera offered Abraham all the spoils in return for the people, while Melchizedek gave Abraham bread and wine. Abraham rejected Bera's offer but accepted the bread and wine from Melchizedek and gave him tithes of the spoils. All of this is symbolic and presents some important spiritual truths that you should understand and apply today.

Abraham had to choose between two kings who represented two opposite ways of life. Sodom was a wicked city (Gen. 13:13; Ezek. 16:49–50), and Bera represented the dominion of this world system with its appeal to the flesh (Eph. 2:1–3). Bera means "gift," suggesting that the world bargains for your allegiance. But Sodom means "burning," so be careful how you choose! If you bow down to Bera, everything you live for will burn up one day. That's what happened to Lot!

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<sup>33</sup> Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

Melchizedek means “king of righteousness,” and Salem means “peace.” Hebrews 7 and Psalm 110 both connect Melchizedek with Jesus Christ, the “King of peace” and the “King of righteousness” (85:10). Like Melchizedek in Abraham’s day, Jesus Christ is our King-Priest in heaven, enabling us to enjoy righteousness and peace as we serve Him (Isa. 32:17; Heb. 12:11). Certainly we can see in the bread and wine a reminder of our Lord’s death for us on the cross.

So, when Abraham rejected Bera and accepted Melchizedek, he was making a statement of faith, saying, “Take the world, but give me Jesus.” Lot should have made the same decision, but he chose to return to his life of compromise.

Why would it have been wrong for Abraham to take the spoils? After all, didn’t he risk his life and the lives of his retainers to defeat the invading kings and rescue the prisoners? Legally, Abraham had every claim to the spoils; but morally, they were out of bounds. *Many things in this world are legal as far as courts are concerned but morally wrong as far as God’s people are concerned.*

Furthermore, before Abraham could take the spoils, he had to agree to restore the people of Sodom to their king who said, “Give me the persons” (Gen. 14:21). Just as God wants to use human bodies for His glory (Rom. 12:1–2; 1 Cor. 6:19–20), so the enemy wants to use human bodies for evil purposes (Rom. 6:12–13). The enemy said, in effect, “Give me your body,” to Joseph (Gen. 39) and Daniel (Dan. 1); but they said, “No!” But when the enemy said the same to Samson (Jud. 16), David (2 Sam. 11), and Judas (John 13:27), they said, “Yes!” And what a price they paid!

Abraham did not accept King Bera’s offer. Instead, it is likely that Abraham gave everyone he had rescued opportunity to come with him and trust the true and living God. Abraham was a powerful sheik, and his neighbors knew about his tent and his altar. But there is no indication that any of them (including Lot’s family) accepted his invitation. Except for Lot and two of his daughters, they all perished in the destruction of Sodom.

*A new blessing.* Melchizedek had something better to offer Abraham: the blessing of the “Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth.” *Abraham lived by the blessing of the Lord, not the bribery of the world.* He did not want anybody to think that the world made him rich. Even a small thing like a shoelace might affect his walk! Too many servants of God have weakened their testimony by accepting applause and gifts from the people of the world. You cannot be a servant of God and a celebrity in the world at the same time.

Melchizedek met Abraham after the battle *to strengthen him for the victory*. The Lord knows the temptations we face after we have defeated the enemy. Abraham had met the Lord *before the battle* and promised to take nothing for himself from the spoils of victory. He was single-minded as he led his army, and God gave him victory.

Abraham did not impose his convictions on his allies—Aner, Eschol, and Mamre (Gen. 14:24). If they wanted to take part of the spoils, that was their business; and he would not criticize them. Nor did he expect them to give tithes to Melchizedek. Abraham was a pilgrim and stranger, while his allies were men of the world whose conduct was governed by a different set of standards. “Others may—you cannot.”

Genesis 14:20 is the first mention of tithing in the Bible. To tithe is to give God 10 percent, whether of money, farm produce, or animals. (The Heb. word means “ten.”) When we tithe, we acknowledge that God owns everything and that we are grateful stewards of His wealth. The Jews paid an annual tithe to the Lord (Lev. 27:30–33) as well

as a tithe every third year especially for the poor (Deut. 26:12–15). They could also tithe the remaining 90 percent for a special “festive offering” to be enjoyed in Jerusalem (Deut. 12:5–19).

The practice of tithing antedated the Law of Moses; for not only did Abraham tithe, but so did Jacob (Gen. 28:22). For this reason, many Christians believe that God’s people today should begin their giving with the tithe. A godly deacon said to me once, “If the Old Testament Jew under Law could tithe, how much more ought New Testament Christians under grace!” The New Testament plan for giving is outlined in 2 Corinthians 8–9, but tithing is a good place to start.

We must be careful to give out of the devotion of our hearts, and not as a “bribe” for God’s blessings. The late R. G. LeTourneau, well-known Christian manufacturer and philanthropist, used to say, “If you tithe because it pays—it won’t pay!”

But Abraham provides us with a good example of giving. *He brought his gifts to Jesus Christ in the person of Melchizedek.* (See Heb. 7:1–10.) We do not give our tithes and offerings to the church, the pastor, or the members of the finance committee. If our giving is a true act of worship, we will give to the Lord; and, for that reason, we want to give our very best (Mal. 1:6–8).

In one of the churches I pastored, we did not take up offerings on Sundays but provided special boxes at the exits before or after the services. A lad visiting church one day asked his friend what the boxes were for, and he told him, “That’s where we put our offerings.”

The visitor asked, “What happens to the money?”

“I think they give it to Brother Eastep,” the boy replied. (Dr. D.B. Eastep was the pastor at that time.)

Even more perplexed, the lad asked, “Well, what does Brother Eastep do with it?”

This time the boy was ready: “I don’t know how he does it, *but he gives it to God!*”

When my godly predecessor heard that story, he laughed heartily. He knew (as we all know) that each worshiper must bring his or her gifts to the Lord and give from a grateful heart. All God’s people are priests and can bring their sacrifices to Him (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

Abraham was *prompt in his giving*. His stewardship principles were firmly fixed in his heart so there was no reason to delay.

He was also *proportionate in his giving*, a policy encouraged by the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 16:1–2). Tithing is a good place to begin; but as the Lord blesses, we must increase that percentage if we are to practice the kind of “grace giving” that is described in 2 Corinthians 8–9.

Abraham gave *because he loved God and wanted to acknowledge His greatness and His goodness*. What a contrast between “the Most High God” and the heathen idols! Abraham’s God is possessor (Creator) of heaven and earth (Gen. 14:19; see Isa. 40). He deserves all the worship and praise of all of His people!

Before the battle, Abraham lifted his hand by faith in a solemn vow to God that he would take nothing from the spoils. He had a single heart and mind as he led the army (Matt. 6:24).

During the battle, Abraham wielded his sword by faith and trusted God for victory.

After the battle, by faith Abraham closed his hands to the King of Sodom but opened his hands to the King of Salem, receiving bread and wine and giving tithes.

“And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4, NKJV).<sup>34</sup>

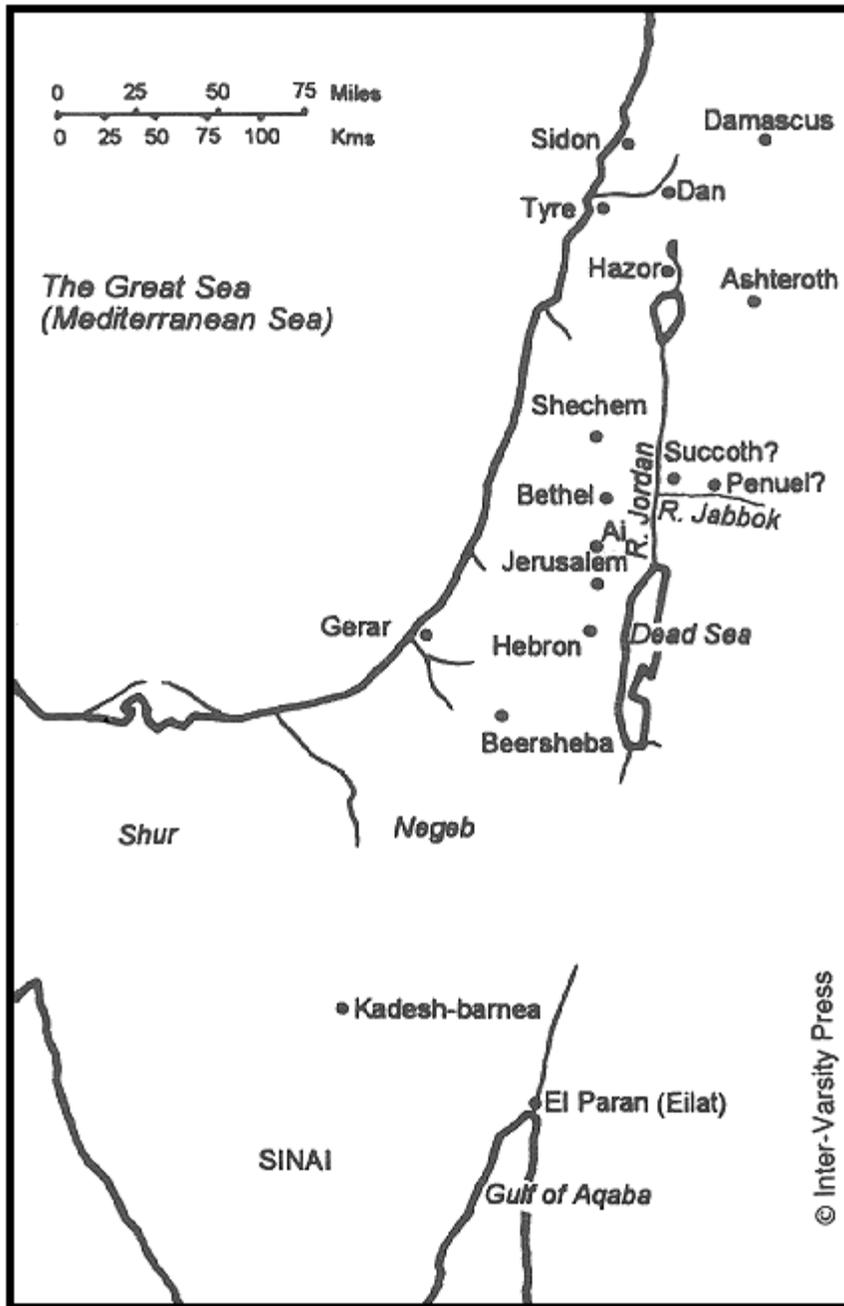
### **Melchizedek and Christ:**

Melchizedek, a priest (Genesis 14:18) as well as a king, is mentioned again in Psalm 110:4 and Hebrews 5:6-10; Hebrews 7:1-22.

- There are three main theories concerning Melchizedek:
  1. That he was actually Noah’s son Shem.
  2. That he was a preincarnate appearance of Christ himself.
  3. That he was simply a king of Jerusalem—*Melchizedek* literally means “king of righteousness,” and Salem may be an early name for Jerusalem.
  
- Melchizedek gave Abram bread and wine and blessed him. This is the first Bible mention of bread and wine, foreshadowing Christ’s death.
  
- Genesis 14:18 is the first biblical occurrence of the word priest. The three great OT offices were prophet, priest, and king:
  1. The prophet represented God to humanity (1 Kings 18:15).
  2. The priest represented humanity to God (Leviticus 8:1-9:24).
  3. The king, under God, ruled over humanity (1 Samuel 10:1).
  
- Melchizedek filled two of those offices; Christ fills all three:
  1. He was a prophet (past ministry, Matthew 21:11; Luke 7:16; John 1:18; John 4:19; Hebrews 1:1-2).
  2. He is a priest (present ministry, Romans 8:34; Hebrews 4:14-16; Hebrews 7:24-27).
  3. He will be a king (future ministry, Rev. 19:11-16).

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<sup>34</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1991). *Be obedient* (Ge 14:17). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.



**Hebrews 11:8–19** focuses on three events in Abraham’s life that God fondly remembers:

By faith, Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered Him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand of the seashore.

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Richards, L., & Richards, L. O. (1987). *The teacher's commentary*. Includes index. (52). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

At sermoncentral.com I found the following sermon (teaching) by Amy Bickel a Baptist minister. This is from her sermon series “The code of the Priest”. I thought it was a very good presentation to help us understand Melchizedek.

### **The Melchizedek Priesthood: by Amy Bickel**

This morning we are going to start a new Bible Study Series of teachings, which I’ve entitled The Code of the Priest. Every once in a while I like to study and dig out new information in the Bible that helps us to receive a bigger picture of the God we serve and how He works in our lives. This series is designed to strengthen your knowledge and understanding of God’s Word and how He interacts with His children. This morning we are going to start laying some of the groundwork for this study that will take us from Abraham in the book of Genesis to Jesus’ walk on this earth in the Gospels to our future positions in eternity as seen in the book of Revelation. I hope you enjoy this series as much as I did preparing for it.

You will also notice that in the insert that I’ve placed in the bulletins that have the scripture references on it, we are going to be looking at a lot of scripture. I would encourage you to take the time to read these references for yourself at home and to study them and familiarize yourself with them so that you will have a deeper understanding of what we are going to be studying in the next few weeks. You may even want to read them in the New International Version of the Bible for clearer and simpler understanding, especially the entire seventh chapter of Hebrews. Now having said that let’s get into our study.

Many Christians who are the least bit familiar with the Bible know about the priesthood of Aaron. At the time of the nation of Israel’s Exodus from Egypt and the setting up of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, God provided a way for His people to come to Him and be forgiven of sins through offerings by the priests. The priests, who were descendants of Moses’ brother Aaron and members of the tribe of Levi, were chosen to act as go-betweens for the people as they approached God on their behalf.

But how many of you are aware that the Bible talks about another priesthood? It’s a rather mysterious and sometimes misunderstood priesthood found first in the book of Genesis, mentioned prophetically in the book of Psalm, and finally explained by the author of the book of Hebrews. It is the Melchizedek priesthood.

Let’s take a look in the book of Genesis and the 14th chapter where the name Melchizedek is first introduced. Reading from Genesis 14:18-20 (KJV), “ And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. [19] And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of Heaven and earth: [20] And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.”

Genesis 14 is a chapter from the family history of the origins of Israel. It tells the story of how Abraham’s nephew, Lot, was swept up into the military doings of the ancient world

and of how Abraham himself played a role in that history.

If you remember the story, Lot and Abraham parted company because their households and herds were getting too large to remain combined. Uncle Abraham gave Lot free reign to choose whichever part of the land he wished, and Lot chose the Valley of Siddum, known today as the Dead Sea. But it was not dead in that day. Rather, it was a lush, fertile valley, reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. Lot settled in a city located in that valley called Sodom. Abraham turned and went in the opposite direction.

Then a day came when a messenger arrived at the tent of Abraham with terrible news. A coalition of kings from the east had invaded and taken Sodom and enslaved all of its inhabitants – including Lot and his family. Abraham immediately organized a rescue party. In a brazen display of courage and faith, he catches up with the raiders and attacks them by night, putting them to route and recovering not only his nephew, but all the wealth and all the citizens of Sodom.

However, the most unusual part of this tale took place on the return journey. It was here that Abraham was met by a new figure; a mysterious priest-king known as Melchizedek. The Scriptures tell us that they met, that Melchizedek brought bread and wine and a blessing, and that Abraham rewarded him with a tenth of all. And that is it, the end of the story. Melchizedek is not mentioned again in the rest of Genesis nor anywhere in any of the historical books of the Old Testament.

So, just who is this mysterious figure and what is so important about him that God included this short story about him in His Holy Word to us?

## **I. Introducing Melchizedek**

Well, the best biblical explanation we can find is located in the New Testament in the 7th chapter of the book of Hebrews. This entire chapter covers the description of the Melchizedek priesthood and gives us the best view of just who this figure was and what he represented.

So let's begin by reading the first three verses of chapter 7: "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him: [2] To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; [3] Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually."

We don't know a lot about Melchizedek. He emerges from the pages of antiquity to have his brief encounter with Abraham, he pronounces a blessing, accepts Abraham's gifts, and then once again disappears into the pages of history. We don't know much about him, but there are a few things we do know:

## A. His Name

First, we know his name, and in the Bible a name can hold great meaning. When we name our children, it is often only because we like the sound of it. But names in the ancient world were full of meaning, especially among the Jews. Names were given to tell something about the character of the person. This is why you occasionally see a person whose name is changed in Scripture. This was the case with Abraham. His name was originally Abram, which meant “father of high places.” But God changed it later to Abraham, which meant “father of a multitude.”

The name Melchizedek is actually a compound name. It is made up of two Hebrew words that have been joined together. “Melek” is the Hebrew word for “king.” “Zadok” means “righteousness.” So, as the author of Hebrews tells us in the second verse, Melchizedek is the king of righteousness.

## B. His Domain

The second thing we know about him is his domain, or where he reigned. Both Genesis and Hebrews tell us that Melchizedek was the King of Salem.

Salem is believed to be one of the ancient names for the city of Jerusalem. Before the city became the capital of Israel, it belonged to a people known as the Jebusites. Their city was alternately known as “Jebus” and “Salem.” Its name today reflects a composite of those two names: Jebus+Salem = Jerusalem.

But remember, names have meaning. And the meaning of the word Salem is “peace.” It is a derivative of the word many Jewish speaking people use as a greeting, “Shalom,” which also means “peace.” So Melchizedek is the King of Salem, ancient Jerusalem, or according to the meaning of his name, he is the King of peace.

## C. His Genealogy

And a third thing we know about this mysterious figure is his genealogy. Hebrews 7:3 tells us that he is without father, without mother, without descent.

The kingship of Israel could only trace their roots back to David. The priesthood of Israel could only trace their roots back to Aaron and the tribe of Levi. But Melchizedek was both a king and a priest who resided in Jerusalem, the city of God, long before the time of either David or Aaron. And he has no genealogy.

He appears from obscurity out of the pages of history. We know nothing of his origins and we know nothing of his death. So does this mean that the man Abraham met was not born and did not die? And if so, then what does that tell us about him?

Well, this passage has been a source of controversy probably ever since it was written. But from looking at just these three things that the Bible tells us about Melchizedek, I

personally believe that only Jesus Christ himself could fulfill this description. So, I have a tendency to believe that the man that met Abraham on the way home from war, was actually the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. After all there are other examples of the Son of God appearing to man in the Old Testament. For example, He made an appearance in the fiery furnace in the book of Daniel when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow before the statue of King Nebuchadnezzar.

Jesus is the only one who can claim to have no genealogy in the fact that He existed before mankind was created, and He has no end, because He overcame death and the grave. In John 8:56-58 Jesus speaking to the Jews said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." [57] Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" [58] Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

Only Jesus openly claimed to have been present before Abraham. Only He can be the one without beginning of days or end of life. Only He has the power to have an endless life.

#### D. The Tithe, the Blessing and the Communion

Finally, we know of three other things about Melchizedek that point to Him as being Christ. In the first passage that we read in Genesis it tells us that he went out of Salem and offered bread and wine to Abraham. Here, 2000 years before the man, Jesus walked on the earth, Melchizedek, the king of righteousness and the king of peace offers Abraham and his seed communion. This shows us that Jesus' death on the cross was planned from the very beginning, before Israel even became a nation, before the Aaronic priesthood was established, and before David ever sat on the throne.

We also see that Melchizedek received a tithe from Abraham and then blessed him. Hebrews 7:4-7 says, "Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. [5] And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham. [6] But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. [7] And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better."

The Aaronic priesthood received tithes from the children of Abraham because it was required of them in the law. But Melchizedek who is not of the priesthood of Aaron, received tithes from the father through whom all the nations of the world would be blessed, Abraham. It also tells us that the greater (Melchizedek) blessed the lesser (Abraham). So if God promised that in Abraham, all nations would be blessed, how could Melchizedek be greater than Abraham unless he was more than just a human priest? Who in Biblical history was greater than Abraham other than Jesus Christ himself?

So what does all this mean? What's so important about knowing that Melchizedek was a priest of the most high God and gave communion to Abraham and received tithes from

him?

## **II. The Melchizedek Priesthood**

It's important for us to know this because the Bible tells us that God created a new priesthood named after this man. And His purpose for creating this new priesthood was to replace the old Aaronic or Levitical one. The Old Testament Scriptures even promised a future and perfect priesthood in Psalm 110:4. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou (Christ) art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

### **A. Levitical Priesthood Temporary**

Let's look again at Hebrews 7: 11-17, "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron? [12] For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. [13] For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. [14] For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. [15] And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest, [16] Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. [17] For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

The Levitical priesthood was always meant to be temporary. It did not bring perfection or completeness. The priests had no moral or spiritual qualifications to pass in order to become priests. That is evident when you look at some of those who served as priests. God struck dead two of the sons of Aaron for using improper methods of worship, and He condemned the immoral acts of the sons of Eli who were turning the Tabernacle into a brothel. The only requirement for the Aaronic priesthood was that the priest must be able to trace his ancestry back to Aaron. It was basically passed from father to son throughout the generations.

But the Melchizedek priesthood is different. Not anyone can make a claim to be a priest after this order. The requirement for belonging to it can be found at the end of verse 16, it says that in order to belong one must have the power of an endless life.

Another requirement is that just like the original Melchizedek of Genesis one must be both a king and a priest. This is unique, because in the Old Testament you could be a prophet, a priest, or a king, but never more than one of those. Yet Melchizedek was. And so was Jesus Christ, and believe it or not, so will we. Revelation 1:6, "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever, Amen." And Revelation 5:10 says, "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

## B. Levitical Priesthood Corrupt

You see, God knew that the original priesthood of Aaron would not last. It was based on a law that was weak and imperfect and could not save anyone, because no one could keep the law perfectly. God knew that He would have to provide another way for salvation and interaction with His children and so He determined to create a new and better priesthood.

By the time Christ was born physically into this world the Roman Empire was ruling the world including Israel and the Holy Land. The priesthood at the Temple in Jerusalem had over time become increasingly corrupt. They were disobedient to God.

For generations the priesthood had been passed down from father to son. But the Roman Empire at this time was actually appointing the men that they wanted to be priests instead of allowing the hereditary line to continue. Because of this, we read in the book of Malachi (which was written 400 years before Christ's birth) what was really going on at the Temple.

Malachi 1:6,7,8,13, "A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honor? And if I be a master, where is my fear? Saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? [7] Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. [8] And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? Saith the Lord of hosts. [13] Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! And ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? Saith the Lord."

The priests no longer revered and honored God as they should. They had no fear of Him and disobeyed His commandments. They were offering polluted bread at His table and sick and lame animals for offering. They were even complaining about the fact that serving the Lord was wearisome and tiring! Then Rome steps in and places men in the priestly positions for purely political reasons. Is it any wonder God had had enough?

In Malachi 3:1 we see what God decided to do about this travesty of the priesthood. "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."

God said in essence, "I'm going to send someone to straighten out this mess you've created. I'm going to change the priesthood. I'll get a faithful priest. One who is able to make intercession and redeem my people so we won't have to do these animal sacrifices anymore. A priest where people will be able to have access to My throne, and they won't have to go into Jerusalem and into a temple to speak to me. I'm going to change the Old Covenant priesthood into a New Covenant priesthood, and there's going to be one loyal priest to me – the Son of the living God."

### C. Six Changes

And when this change or transfer from one priesthood to the other and one covenant to the other takes place there were going to be six changes that occur.

1. The Temple would be changed. – God would no longer dwell in a building made with human hands, but our bodies would become living temples of the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor. 3:16, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”

2. The sacrifices would change. – No longer would you offer the blood of animals on the altar for atonement from sin, but one man, Christ would suffer and be the sacrifice once and for all. Hebrews 7:27, “Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once. When he offered up himself.”

3. The offerings would change. – Instead of bringing animals we now bring tithes, praise, finances, worship, time, and service to God. 1 Cor. 16:2, “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him...”

4. Access to God would change. – God’s dwelling place on earth for the longest time was the Holy of Holies inside the Temple, and only the High Priest had access to that room and then only once a year. God said, NO MORE. Now everyone will have free access to me without the need of a priest or the restriction of a certain day, because they who call upon Me shall be as priests. Revelation 1:6, “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father...”

5. Prayers would change. – In the Old Testament prayers were often said in the name of the covenant person. For example in Ex. 32:13 they started the prayer by saying remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thy servants. In the New Testament prayers would be said in the name of Jesus, the very Son of God. In John 15:16 Jesus said, “...that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”

6. Priesthood would change. – From the Aaronic or Levitical to the Melchizedek priesthood.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=107524&libronix=1>, Amy Bickel, Baptist