

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

GENESIS 11-14

I live on a three acre wooded lot. *But I don't live alone.* A family of deer are my neighbors. They appear only in the late afternoon or wee hours of the morning. They nibble a bit on the ivy bed or at Kathy's flowers. By daybreak they're gone... A majestic grey owl also lives close by. He's more stealth than the deer. The last time I saw him he was sitting on my swing. When I opened the door to get a closer look, he moved onto the limb of a nearby pine tree. When I walked toward him he showed off his wingspan and flew away... I'm a nice neighbor, but the animals in my yard **fear** me.

And this is true of all undomesticated animals. A bear, or lion, or snake, or shark steer clear of human beings. They only attack when diseased or threatened.

And where does this fear originate? Welcome to the post-flood world. Noah exited the Ark onto a planet that had radically changed. As 2 Peter 3:6 puts it, "**the world that then existed perished.**" The pre-flood paradise was replaced with rugged terrain, and brutal weather. And hostility existed between Noah and his former furry friends. Humans and animals became predators. Mankind was now forced to hunt, and be hunted.

And in this foreign and frightening new world it would be mankind's tendency to gather - to huddle up for protection. "**Stronger Together**" would be the campaign slogan. But this was not God's command to Noah and his descendants as they exited the Ark. In Genesis 9:1, God told Noah, "**Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.**" They were to scatter and repopulate the planet.

Chronologically, Genesis 10 *follows* Genesis 11. The "**Table of Nations**" showed how families and tribes migrated, and settled across the Mesopotamian Valley.

Chapter 11 takes us to a place called Babel, and explains why God had to jump start this resettlement. For rather than spread out as God had commanded, Noah's descendants disobeyed God, and huddled up.

They gathered in what is today, Iraq - in the plain of Shinar - *as one people, under one government, even one ruler.* And according to Chapter 10 their leader's name was **Nimrod**. The word means "**to rebel.**" Nimrod led the world's first organized revolt against God.

Genesis 10:9 tells us Nimrod was a "**mighty hunter.**" Tradition says he invented the first hunting techniques, and had an uncanny way with animals. In a world where animals had become a threat to humans, and mankind had little skill in defending himself - a man with Nimrod's abilities would be hailed a savior!

Chapter 11, "Now the whole earth had one language and one speech." *What was that language? No one knows.* Some scholars believe Hebrew. Whatever the dialect, *I'm sure it was spoken with a Southern accent.*

And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar." Later, when Moses' mom makes a basket and floats her son down the Nile she coats the basket with this same "asphalt." *It was a waterproofing material.*

"And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." Nimrod builds a tower to the heavens, not to God's glory, but as stated, to "make a name for ourselves." It was built to the glory of man.

And we know a lot about these ziggurats. They were observatories/temples. The Babylonians worshipped and consulted the stars, and Nimrod was the chief culprit who introduced the world to the evil of astrology.

Now pay attention here to *what Nimrod does and where Nimrod does it...* He constructs a water-proof skyscraper in the middle of the desert. "Why build a water-proof tower in an arid wilderness?" *They must've expected a flood!* Nimrod had convinced the post-flood population that God was a liar - *that God and His rainbow couldn't be trusted.* The Jewish Talmud tells us that Nimrod "wanted to wage war against God."

Nimrod convinced the descendants of Noah that *he was the good guy and God was the bad guy.* And his deception will be duplicated in the last days when the antichrist gathers the nations into a global government.

It's interesting that today, the world again speaks a single language - *the Xs and Os of digitalize data flow over the internet.* Computerized communication has set us up for another Nimrod. And when the world gathers - whether it's for the Olympic Games, or at the United Nations, or for some global summit - it's always to glorify the *human spirit*, not the *Holy Spirit*. This was Nimrod's motive, and sadly it is the spirit of our age!

Verse 5, "But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built." It's not that God doesn't see all things from heaven. The idea in Him "coming down" is God taking a special interest.

"And the LORD said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them." Realize, *God is against globalism!* Not because it's a bad idea for humans to unite and come together, but God doesn't trust the heart of man.

When self-centered men gather there's always the potential for sinful ambition to

drag the whole of us down. God separated mankind so that rebellion and apostasy would be minimized and stay localized. I'm for worldwide unity, *but only under the reign of Jesus!*

God says in verse 7, "Come, let Us go down..." And again, God speaks of Himself in the plural, similar to 1:26, "let Us make man in Our image." It's a reference to His triune nature. He is one God, in three persons.

"Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." Man's rebellion had to be held in check, so God threw a wrench in our ability to communicate. He confused our original mono-tongue, and caused the population to scatter and gravitate toward the specific language each person could understand and speak.

"So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel (that is, "confusion"), because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth."

This was an act of God's mercy and protection. If He hadn't baffled the languages, Nimrod's occult religion would've become normative, and doomed humanity. God broke up the party at Babel to begin a new work, *to establish a people who would be faithful to Him.*

Genesis 11 ends with *the important genealogy of Shem*. And in it you'll find that Noah's son, Shem, lived 50 years after Abraham's son, Isaac, was born. So don't believe it when skeptics suggest that the early accounts of Genesis were passed down by word of mouth over countless generations, like an ancient game of telephone!... Lamech, Noah's dad, got the account from Adam. Shem, Noah's son, got it from Lamech. Isaac's 12 sons, the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel, got it from Shem. So it took just three links to get from the first man, Adam, to the nation of Israel.

Verse 10 tells us, "This is the genealogy of Shem: Shem was 100 years old, and begot Arphaxad 2 years after the flood. After he begot Arphaxad, Shem lived 500 years, and begot sons and daughters. Arphaxad lived 35 years, and begot Salah. After he begot Salah, Arphaxad lived 403 years, and begot sons and daughters. Salah lived 30 years, and begot Eber. After he begot Eber, Salah lived 430 years, and begot sons and daughters. Eber lived 34 years, and begot Peleg. After he begot Peleg, Eber lived 430 years, and begot sons and daughters. Peleg lived 30 years, and begot Reu. After he begot Reu, Peleg lived 209 years, and begot sons and daughters. Reu lived 32 years, and begot Serug. After he begot Serug, Reu lived 207 years, and begot sons and daughters. Serug lived 30 years, and begot Nahor. After he begot Nahor, Serug lived 200 years, and begot sons and daughters."

But note, the life spans are shortening. Humans no longer live 900 years. Ages are dwindling toward current averages. Without the pre-flood vapor canopy protecting the earth from the sun we now aged faster.

Verse 24, “Nahor lived 29 years, and begot Terah. After he begot Terah, Nahor lived 119 years, and begot sons and daughters. Now Terah lived 70 years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran.” All this is leading us to the pivotal character, Abram. “This is the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans. Then Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah. But Sarai was barren; she had no child. And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there.” They named this stopover after Abram’s brother, *Haran*. “So the days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.”

In Genesis 1-11 we’ve been racing through history. These first 11 chapters cover a period of about 2000 years, while the last 39 chapters span only 245 years. For beginning in Chapter 12, God’s focus changes, from mankind in mass, to the single family of Abraham.

In Genesis 1-11 God works with the whole of humanity - *and with little success*. It culminates in Chapter 11 with a worldwide revolt. Satan chooses **a man**, named *Nimrod* - **a place**, known as *Babel* - and **a means**, called *fear*. God has to bust up the mutiny.

But now in Genesis 12, God’s strategy changes. No longer does He work with mankind as a whole; instead, He picks one family through which He’ll restore His relationship with mankind. And beginning in Genesis 12, God chooses **a man**, named *Abram* - **a place**, known as *Canaan* - and **a means**, called *faith*. For the rest of the Bible is the story of the salvation God works out through the Hebrew people - the family of Abram.

If I asked you to divide your Bible into two parts most folks would bisect it between Malachi and Matthew, *Old and New Testaments*. But it would be just as valid to divide it here - between Genesis 11 and 12. Because from here on we’re dealing with the family of Abram...

Genesis 12 records God’s call, “Now the LORD had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.” Genesis 11:28 says Abram lived in Ur of the Chaldeans. Ur was one of the wealthiest and most sophisticated cities in the ancient world. It was known for its extravagances.

Bathtubs and hot-tubs were first used in Ur. And while living in *Ur*, Abram married a *her*.

His wife was a woman named "*Sarai*." Her name means "*contentious*." Which proves marriages were arranged in those days, for no man in his right mind would voluntarily marry a gal named "*contentious*."

One day Abe came home from work, and announced to Sarai, "*Baby, pack up the house, we're moving!*" Sarai got so excited, "*He finally got a raise! Uptown Ur here we come. Wow, we can buy something in a swim and tennis...*" I can hear Sarai asking Abram, "*Honey, in which posh subdivision will we be moving into?*"

She wasn't ready for his answer. "*I don't know.*" "What do you mean you don't know?" "*Well, God told me to move, He just didn't tell me where!*" And recall her name, "*contentious*." A heated discussion followed!

Abram's initial foray in faith was more like a stumble than a step of faith... In 11:31, we're told rather than leave his father's house as God told him, Abram took Terah, his father - and his nephew, Lot - with him. And he settled in Haran - 600 miles west of Ur, yet 400 miles east of Canaan. Abram settled for less than God's best. **Abram followed God, but only half-way.**

And this happens to Christians. They come to church, clean up their act, but still hold on to elements of the old life. They've got one foot in the world, and one foot with the Lord. Rather than move into a new land, they only move upstream. It's been said, "*A backslidden believer has too much of the world to enjoy God, and too much of God to enjoy the world.*" Or as Donald Barnhouse once put it, "*They have enough Christianity to be miserable in a nightclub, but not enough to be happy in a prayer meeting.*"

And a partial follower of Jesus will be a miserable person. Abram's home of compromise was the city of "*Haran*" which means "*parched*." And when you compromise your commitment to Christ, and follow Him halfway - you end up parched and spiritually dry.

It seems Abram didn't fully follow God until his dad died. Terah was holding him back. And let me ask you, *what is the Terah in your life?* What needs to die for you to become a fully-devoted follower of Jesus? Often faith begins with a funeral. It's only when we bury an old desire or habit that we're free to move on with God.

God continues addressing Abram in verse 2, "*I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.*" Recall, this is what Nimrod wanted! He had said, "*let us make a name for ourselves,*" but he tackled it the wrong way. He rebelled. Struck out on his own... Abram on the other hand, lived by faith. He follow God into the unknown, and God promised to make his "*name great.*"

God tells him in verse 3, **"I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."** Over the course of history, nations have risen and fallen based on their treatment of Abram and his family.

Greek culture began its decline when Antiochus destroyed the Temple... The same was true for **Rome**... Jewish Inquisitions were the end of **Spain's** greatness... When Hitler tried to exterminate the Jews, **Germany's** defeat was certain... I believe one of the reasons for the fall of the **Soviet Union** was its cruel treatment of Jews, and staunch opposition to Israel...

In contrast, the reason God has shed His grace on America over the last 100 years is because we've remained Israel's staunchest ally. *And yet, if we ever pull that support, God's judgment will be close behind.*

In Genesis 12 God makes a three-fold covenant with Abram and his progeny - *and it becomes the bedrock of the Bible!* This is the most far-reaching and strategic agreement in Scripture. God promises Abram *a chunk of land - his descendants will be a great nation - and through them, all the world is blessed.* **Understand the this covenant, and you will understand the Bible.**

Here's a condensed version - just three words - *land, nation, blessing.* Or an even easier way to memorize this covenant... **sod, seed, salvation.** We'll be talking about this covenant as we continue through the Bible.

Verse 4, **"So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land."** Shechem was the center of Canaan.

Verse 7, **"Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land."** Note, it's when Abram arrives in Canaan that God affirms His promise. Often we desire God's affirmation; then when we get it, we obey. That's not how God does business! He blesses faith! *Take Him at His Word. Act on His promise.* Be obedient; **then** God will confirm His will.

"And there (in Shechem) he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South." Twice now, as he travels through the land, Abram builds an altar - at Moreh and Bethel.

Everywhere Abram goes we find him building **altars**. He could've dug **wells** for water, or built **homes** for comfort, or **forts** for protection - *instead he built altars*. His top priority wasn't sustenance, or comfort, or protection - *but worship...* Maybe you're building a home, or a business, or a fortune, or a family, but as you journey through life are you building altars? *Are you stopping along the way to worship God?*

Understand, Abram was a man of faith, but as we've already seen his faith wasn't perfect. From time to time Abram was guilty of stumbles or lapses of faith. And we find another one in verse 10, "**Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land.**"

When famine strikes rather stay where God called him, and trust God to meet his needs, Abram bolts for Egypt... *and on the journey he speaks to his wife...*

"**And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, 'Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.'**" Now you know why Sarai was so *contentious...* she had to live with a jerk like Abram! *Nothing like laying down your life for your wife.*

It's interesting, Sarai was 65 years old, yet she was so beautiful she could go shopping for a bikini with her social security check. This gal was a *knock out*, but all Abram is worried about is getting *knocked off!* So he concocts a lie... *Sarai needs to take off her wedding band, and claim to be his sister...* And this was partially true. Genesis 20:12 explains Sarai was Abram's wife **and** half-sister. Abram is suggesting they tell a half-truth. *And yet a lie mixed with the truth is still just a lie.*

Verse 14, "**So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she was very beautiful. The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house. He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels. But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.**"

Ladies, 1 Peter 3:6 points to Sarah as a model for every Christian wife. She was submissive to her husband - *not just when he acted wisely, and made smart moves, and had her best interests in mind.* Sarah submitted to his leadership even when he was pulling boneheaded blunders like he does here. Sarah still submitted, and God rewarded her submission by protecting her *purity*, and overlooking Abe's *stupidity...*

In the covenant God made with Abram the nations are supposed to be blessed

through him, but here Abram gets rebuked by a pagan king. Verse 18, “And Pharaoh called Abram and said, “What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, ‘She is my sister’? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take her and go your way.” So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.” Don’t think Abram walks away from his lapse of faith unscathed. He’ll bring from Egypt two items that will give him problems later, *herds and Hagar*. His herds will cause a rift between him and his nephew Lot, and Hagar will create a rift with Sarah.

Chapter 13, “Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South. Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.” Many people believe Abram ended up the richest man on earth. “And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD.”

In Revelation 2 Jesus addresses the church at Ephesus. **They had left their first love.** They allowed their initial passion and enthusiasm for God to wane. But Jesus told them how to rekindle it... Three words: **remember, repent, repeat.** Remember from where you’ve fallen. Turn back to God at that point. And repeat your initial works. **Remember, repent, repeat.**

And this is what Abram does here. He *recalls* the beginnings of his faith. He goes to Bethel... He *repents* from steering off course... And he *repeats* time spent at the altar. **If you want to alter your life for the better; then return to the altar.** Revive your *heart for worship*.

Verse 5, “Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land.” Notice, out of the blue, Moses, author of Genesis, speaks of Canaanites and Perizzites. *And why?* Perhaps he’s pointing out that the conflict between Abram and Lot was a poor witness. Believers arguing while pagans watch is never good. Christians today should guard against that mistake!

“So Abram said to Lot, “Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren.” There are times when even Christian workers experience strife and conflict. And the key to overcoming that friction is to remember Abram’s words, **“for we are brethren.”**

Yet there must've been some legitimate issues that necessitated a decoupling, for

Abram tells Lot... "Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left." Lot, *it's your choice!* "And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom. But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD."

Sodom was the Las Vegas or Bourbon St. of its day, "sin city." Yet the choice was Lot's, and he "*pitch his tent as far as Sodom.*" He saw the natural advantages around the Jordan, the lush gardens at the mouth of the Dead Sea. It was beautiful, yet Lot ignored its evil.

And how many Christians make the same mistake? Oh, they love the physical amenities, and the prestige that comes with the location, but they don't consider the spiritual impact that comes with that environment.

Lot was the guy who joined the country club since he liked hanging out with cool people, in cool places. But he failed to see that the bad company he surrounded himself with would eventually drag down his family.

Verse 14, "And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are - northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever."

Lot looked east and chose the Jordan Valley. But God tells Abram to look to the north, south, east, and west. One day his heirs will inherit it all. Abram acted unselfishly. He let go of *his* desires, *his* ambitions, *his* dreams. He let Lot choose. And since he did, God blessed Abram with abundance. Matthew 6:33 is true, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you."

Verse 15 tells us the duration of the promises God made to Abram and his heirs, "**all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.**" And "forever" is a very long lease! The covenant made with Abram passes on to Isaac; then to his son, Jacob. The Hebrews will inherit this covenant, but Jews and Arabs are all Abram's children. There is room in the land for both. *But not if one denies the other its right to exist.*

And this is happening today. Palestinians shout "from the river to the sea" and in doing so lay claim to all the land, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. They deny the Jews their right to live where God promised them. *They're fighting*

against God.

Verse 16, “And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered.” At this point Abram was childless, but he’ll end up the father of an innumerable amount of people.

Then God tells Abram, “Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.” I love verse 17. After giving Abram the title deed to the Canaan, God tells him to walk the property. And all men love to walk their land, *put shoe to soil*. In other words, he’s to *enjoy the blessings God has given him*.

And this is a word to all believers. In Christ we’re not just entitled to spiritual blessings, God wants us to explore and experience our blessings firsthand. As the prophet Obadiah tells us, “possess your possessions.” Every believer needs to get out and walk the property!

Verse 18, “Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the LORD.” He moves further South, and again builds an altar. He worships and spends time with God. This is why Abram was such a man of faith. This is the key to fortifying our faith. Not building houses, or bank accounts, or stock portfolios, or winning records... but **building altars**.

Chapter 14, “And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar (Secular sources call him, Hammurabi), Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations, that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).” Two alliances of city-states - four from Babel war against five from the Dead Sea. “All these joined together in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim...” The Hebrew word “Rephaim” means “giants.” It’s another name for the *nephilim* we spoke of in Genesis 6. The Rephaim may’ve been more mutant offspring of demons and mortal women.

Apparently, this was an isolated example of what had been widespread before the flood. It now occurs in an idolatrous Canaan. Moses says the Rephaim lived in Ashteroth Karnaim. Ashteroth was a Canaanite fertility goddess. Her worship was a mix of sex and the occult, conditions which would’ve promoted this type of evil.

Verse 5 continues to list the kings who came with Chedorlaomer to the Dead Sea, and it lists strange people “the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim,”

Deuteronomy 2 identifies both people as “giants.” “And the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as El Paran, which is by the wilderness.” These kings were also part of Chedorlaomer’s coalition.

“Then they turned back and came to En Mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and attacked all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazezon Tamar. And the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out and joined together in battle in the Valley of Siddim (this was the battle of the Dead Sea basin) against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar - four kings against five. Now the Valley of Siddim was full of asphalt pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; some fell there, and the remainder fled to the mountains.”

We’ll see later that Sodom was a hotbed for sexual perversion. Is it any wonder they got beat in battle? Men lacking *moral courage* seldom have courage in other areas of life. They end up falling into the asphalt pits - or as the OKJ puts it “slimepits.” *Slimy people* usually end up mired down in *slimy circumstances*.

Verse 11, “Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way.” But they make a big mistake... “They also took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.” They just picked on the wrong guy’s relative... and it coaxes Abram into battle.

“Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they were allies with Abram.” The word “Hebrew” means “to cross over.” Abram was called “the Hebrew” after he crossed the Jordan into Canaan.

“Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his 318 trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.” Abram was a man of faith, but apparently he saw no conflict between trusting God, and keeping an armed, trained militia under his roof just in case. I’m sure he’d have no problem with a Glock or a Winchester... “(Abram) divided his forces against them by night,” He employed night strategies. In addition to being a man of faith. Abram had quite a military mind.

“And he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people.” Apparently, Abram’s army had been outnumbered, but His God proved to be the difference.

“And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him.” After his victory Abram meets two kings - the sinful king of Sodom, and

the saintly king of Salem. The word “Salem” means “peace.” *Salem* is an abbreviated form of “Jerusalem” or “city of peace.”

“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And here is the mysterious Melchizedek. In the NT, Hebrews 7, the writer tells us Jesus was not a priest after the order of the Jewish priests, the Levites. He was a better priest - after the order of Melchizedek.

Under the Law of Moses there was a separation of church and state. Men were forbidden from being both kings and priests, but this Melchizedek was different, he was both. Thus, Jesus is a priest after Melchizedek, for He is King of kings, and our great High Priest.

Hebrews 7:3 reveals Melchizedek’s bizarre pedigree, “without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God...” He had no birthday or date of death. As Hebrews says, he “remains a priest continually.” This is what’s led many scholars to believe Melchizedek was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus.

Recall in John 8:56 Jesus said to the Jews, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” *But when did Abraham see Jesus?* It might’ve been here - in the person of Melchizedek.

It’s interesting to note what Melchizedek brings with him when he meets Abram, “bread and wine.” Perhaps he and Abram shared communion. *It could be Abram knew a lot more about the Gospel than we assume.*

Verse 20, “And he (Abram) gave him a tithe of all.” This is a big deal to the writer of Hebrews. But his argument is based more on *Oriental symbolism* than our *Western rationalism*. He speaks genetically. He considers Israel’s priests to be in Abram’s loins when Abram pays tithes to Melchizedek and Melchizedek blesses Abram. Both acts mean that the priests Abram sires will be inferior to the priests after Melchizedek. Thus, Jesus is a better priest than the Jewish priests!

It’s interesting, in Genesis Melchizedek plays just a cameo role, but the NT explains how his actions teach us vital lessons, and help us learn much about Jesus.

Verse 21, “Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.” He offers to pay Abram and his militia for their troubles.

“But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I

have made Abram rich' - except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion."

What integrity! Unlike Lot who snuggled up to evil Sodom to enjoy its advantages, Abram wanted nothing to do with Sodom and its money. He certainly didn't want anyone to think he owed Sodom anything. Abram wanted all the glory to go to his great God. *And what's more important to you... money or integrity?*

Abram walked in *integrity*. Lot *compromised*. And in the end both decisions had significant consequences. They do in our lives too... Read ahead, Genesis 15-18.