

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

GENESIS 11-14

Tonight, I want to start with a trivia question...

What does an animal habitat in Locust Grove, Georgia, and a Wisconsin water park - billed as "*America's Largest*" - have in common?

Answer: they both go by the name, "*Noah's Ark*".

But the real Ark had nothing to do with petting zoos or slip 'n slides. Rather than fun and games, the Ark's survivors walked out into a scary, new world.

As 2 Peter 3 puts it "*the world that then existed perished.*"

The pre-flood paradise was replaced by rugged terrain, and brutal weather. In addition, hostility existed between Noah and his former furry friends. Humans and animals became mutual predators. Man was now forced to hunt, and be hunted.

In this foreign and frightening new world it would be our tendency to gather, and huddle up for protection. But that 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* chapter 11. Genesis 10 contains the "*Table of Nations*" - which shows how the nations divided, and later resettled. But chapter 11 takes

us to Babel, and tells us why God had to jump start man's migration.

Rather than spread out, Noah's descendents disobeyed God, and huddled up.

They gathered in Iraq – in the plain of Shinar. They join together as one people, under one government. And they had one ruler – a man identified in chapter 10 as Nimrod. The name means “*to rebel*” - and Nimrod led a revolt against God.

According to 10:9 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 suddenly become a threat to the human race - and man had no skill in defending himself - a man with Nimrod's abilities would be hailed a savior.

Verse 1, “Now the whole earth had one language and one speech.

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.” This same word translated “*asphalt*” is the waterproofing material used on the basket that floated the baby Moses down the Nile.

“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 the glory of God, but in order to “*make a name for ourselves*” – to glorify man.

We know a lot about the Babylonian ziggurats. They were observatories, and temples. The Babylonians worshipped and consulted the stars, and apparently Nimrod was the culprit who introduced the world to the evils of astrology.

But notice what Nimrod does here. He constructs a skyscraper with water-proofing material. “*Why would anyone build a water-proof tower in the middle of the desert?*” They must’ve expected a flood. Apparently, Nimrod had convinced the people that God was a liar – that He and His rainbow couldn’t be trusted.

The Jewish Talmud says that Nimrod “[wanted to wage war against God.](#)”

Nimrod convinced the descendents of Noah that he was the good guy while God was the bad guy. Nimrod’s feat will be duplicated in the last days when the antichrist rallies the nations together and establishes a global government.

It’s interesting, that today, the world again speaks a single language - the Xs and Os that digitalize data and flow over the internet. Global communication has set us up for another Nimrod. And have you noticed, whenever the world comes together – whether for an Olympics, or a Y2K celebration, or a United Nations gathering - it does so to glorify the *human spirit* not the *Holy Spirit*.

This was the motive of Nimrod, and it’s the spirit of our age today.

Verse 5, “But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. 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.” Again, God is against globalism – not because it’s a bad idea, but because He doesn’t trust the heart of man.

As long as men are together, when one family rebels there’s the potential of dragging everyone else down with them. God wanted to separate the population so that rebellion and apostasy could be minimized and remain localized.

I’m for global unity, but only under the reign of Jesus Christ.

God said, “Come, let Us go down...” Notice again, God speaks to Himself in the plural, “let Us go down” - it’s similar to what He said earlier, “let Us make man in Our image.” It’s a reference to the Trinity. God is one God, yet three persons.

God continues, “Let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.” Man’s rebellion needed to be held in check, so God threw a wrench in man’s ability to communicate. He confused the languages, and it caused folks to scatter and gravitate toward like-language.

“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 (the word means “*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 mercy and protection for mankind.

If God hadn’t baffled the languages, Nimrod’s occult brand of religion would’ve become normative for all humans - and doomed humanity. God broke up the party at Babel to begin a new work... on a people who would be faithful to His truth.

Chapter 11 ends with the genealogy of Noah’s son, Shem. Noah lived 350 years after the flood. Shem lived 50 years after Abraham’s son, Isaac, was born.

Don’t believe it when people suggest the creation account in the Bible was passed by word of mouth over countless generations. 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... Just three links take you from the nation of Israel all the way back to the first man, Adam.

Verse 10, “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.” Notice life spans are diminishing in length. Humans no longer live 900 years. The ages are dwindling toward current averages. Evidently, without the protective vapor canopy around the earth humans aged faster.

The latest theories on aging make a similar suggestion... Scientists say that the sun’s radiation triggers an aging process imbedded in our DNA.

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.” Abram becomes a very pivotal character.

“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. So the days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.”

In Genesis 1-11 we're racing through history. The first 11 chapters cover a period of about 2000 years, while the last 39 chapters span only 245 years.

We also jump some giant chasms of understanding, and with not a lot of detail. *What was life like before the flood?* We know very little. *Before the fall?* We know even less. *Before the first creative work?* All we know is God!

In Genesis 1-11 God works with mankind as a whole – *and with little success*. In fact, chapter 11 closes with a worldwide revolt. Satan chooses **a man**, *Nimrod* – **a place**, *Babel* – and **a means**, *fear*. And God has to bust up the mutiny.

If I were to ask you to divide the Bible into two parts most people would put the break between Malachi and Matthew - the Old and New Testaments. But not me, I would insert the division here - between Genesis 11 and Genesis 12.

In Genesis 12, God's strategy changes... No longer will He work with mankind as a whole – instead, He picks one family through which He'll perform His work of redemption. Beginning in Genesis 12, God chooses **a**

man, Abram – a place, Canaan – and a means, faith. And the rest of the Bible is the story of the plan of salvation that God works out through the Hebrews - the family of Abram.

Verse 1 records the call of Abram, **“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 - one of the wealthiest and most sophisticated hubs of ancient civilization. Ur was known for its extravagances. Bathtubs were first used there. Ur was hot-tub haven.

While living in *Ur*, Abram married a *her* - a woman named **“Sarai”**. Her name means **“contentious”**... This proves in those days marriages were arranged, since no man in his right mind would marry a gal named **“contentious”**.

One day Abram came home from work, and announced to Sarai, **“Baby, pack up the house, we’re going to move!”** I’m sure Sarai got excited. She thought, **“He finally got a raise! Uptown Ur here we come. Let’s buy in a swim and tennis.”**

I can hear her ask, **“Honey, in which posh subdivision will we be moving?”**

She wasn’t ready for the answer. **“Uh, uh... 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 remember 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 discover that rather than leave his family and his father’s house as God told him, Abram took Terah, his father - and his nephew, Lot - with him.

Abram settled in Haran – 600 miles west of Ur, but 400 miles east of Canaan. He settled for less than God’s best. Abram followed God, but only half-way.

And this happens to many 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 - one foot in the church. Rather than move to 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 put it, “They have enough Christianity to be miserable in a nightclub, but not enough to be happy in a prayer meeting.” A partial follower of Jesus will be a miserable man.

Abram’s home of compromise was “**Haran**” which means “*parched*”. And when you compromise your commitment to Christ you end up parched - spiritually dry.

It seems Abram didn’t fully follow God until his dad died. Terah was holding him back. Let me ask you, *what’s 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."**

Remember, this is exactly what Nimrod wanted. He said, **"let us make a name for ourselves"**, but he went about it the wrong way. He rebelled against God. He struck out on his own. Abram on the other hand, chose to live by faith and follow God even into the unknown - and God promised to make his **"name great"**.

God promises 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.

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

And in contrast, I have no doubt the reason God continues to shed His grace on America is because we have remained since 1948, Israel's staunchest ally. If we ever decide to pull that support I believe God's judgment

will be close behind.

In Genesis 12 God makes a three-fold covenant with Abram and his progeny.

God promises Abram *a chunk of land - that his descendants will be a great nation - and that through Abram all the world will be blessed*. This is the most far-reaching and strategic covenant in all Scripture. The rest of the Bible builds on the Abrahamic Covenant. Understand this covenant, and you'll understand the Bible.

Here's a condensed version of God's promise to Abram - just three words - *land, nation, blessing*. Or an easy way to remember... **sod, seed, salvation**.

We'll be talking more about this covenant as we go through Genesis.

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."

Verse 7, "Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." Notice, it's

when Abram arrives in Canaan that God affirms His promise. So often we want God's confirmation – and afterwards we'll obey.

But that's not God's way of doing business. God blesses our faith. Take God at His Word - act on His promise – be obedient - and then God will confirm His will.

“And there 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 Abram builds an altar – at Moreh and at Bethel.

In fact, every where this man goes we'll find him building altars.

Understand, he could've dug wells for water, or built homes for comfort, or forts for protection – *instead he builds altars*. His top priority was not sustenance, or comfort, or protection - but worship. Abram built altars to worship God.

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 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 converses with 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 and ornery... she had to live with a jerk like Abram... *Hey, nothing like laying down your life for your woman...*

It's interesting that Sarai was 65 years old at the time, yet she was so beautiful she could go bikini shopping with her social security check. This woman is a *knock out*, but all Abram is worried about is getting *knocked off* – so he concocts a lie... *Sarai needs to take off the wedding band, and claim to be his sister.*

This was partially true. It was a half-truth. Genesis 20:12 explains that Sarai was Abram's half-sister. *But a lie mixed with the truth is still a lie nonetheless.*

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 acted in her best interests. Sarah submitted to his lead even when he was pulling boneheaded blunders like here. Sarah submitted, and God rewarded her submission by protecting Sarah's *purity*, and overlooking Abe's *stupidity*.

The nations are supposed to be blessed through Abram, 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.”

Guys, nothing good comes from a lapse of faith. Don't think Abram gets away unscathed. He brings back from Egypt two items that give him problems later – *herds and*

Hagar. The herds cause a rift with Lot - and Hagar 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. The believers there had left their first love – their initial passion and enthusiasm about God. Jesus tells them how to get it back... Remember where you went astray. Repent. And repeat the first works. **Remember, repent, and repeat.** This is what Abram does here.

He *remembered* his lapse of faith. He went back to where God originally led him. He *repented* of his sin. And then he *repeated* time spent at the altar.

If you want a change for the better – if you want to alter your life, then return to the altar. Have a morning’s devotion. Spend time with God. Call on His name...

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 mentions the Canaanites and Perizzites. And *the question is why?* Perhaps he was pointing out that the conflict between Abram and Lot was a poor witness. Believers were arguing while these pagans were watching.

The Church today sure needs to guard against the same 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.” Guys, there are times when even Christian workers experience strife between each other.

The key to overcoming that friction is to remember that “we are brethren.”

“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.” Abram gives Lot his 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.”

Lot made the mistake of which Christians today are guilty. He ignored the evil of Sodom because he enjoyed its entertainment, and conveniences, and glamour.

Lot was like the guy who went to the parties, but didn't drink. He just liked hanging out with cool people - in the cool places. Lot didn't realize that eventually the bad company he surrounded himself with would eventually drag him down.

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 eastward and chose the plain of the Jordan.

But God tells Abram to look to the north, south, east, and west. One day his heirs will inherit it all. Abram let go of his desires, and ambitions, and dreams – and let Lot choose first. Because he did, God blessed him with everything.

Guys, seek first God's kingdom and all the others things will be added.

Verse 15 also tells us the duration of the promises God made to Abram and Israel, "all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.”

Hey, “forever” makes for a pretty long lease.

Which means despite what the United States, or the Muslim countries, or the world community tell us – the Promised Land belongs not to Arabs, but to Jews.

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.” Abram will end up the father of an innumerable multitude of people.

“Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.”

I love verse 17. After giving Abraham the tithe deed to the land, God tells him to walk the property. In other words, enjoy the blessings God has given you.

This is also a word to believers. In Christ we're not just entitled to all spiritual blessings, God wants me to explore and experience my blessings firsthand. As we're told by the prophet Obadiah we need to “possess our 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.”

Here he is again – spending time with God - building altars. This is the key to building up your faith. Stop building houses, and bank accounts, and build an altar.

Chapter 14, “And it came to pass in the days of

Amraphel king of Shinar (His secular name was 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).” War broke out between nine city-states, in two alliances.

“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 word “Rephaim” means “giants.” It’s another name for the Nephilim we talked about in Genesis 6. The Rephaim may’ve been more mutant offspring of demons and mortal women.

Apparently, an isolated example of what happened before the flood occurred in Canaan after the flood. Moses says the Rephaim lived in Ashteroth Karnaim.

Ashteroth was the Canaanite fertility goddess. The worship of Ashteroth mixed sex with the occult - conditions which would be conducive for this evil to occur.

Verse 5 continues to list the kings who came with Chedorlaomer to put down the revolt popping up near the Dead Sea, “the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim,” Deuteronomy 2 also identifies both the Zuzim and Emim as giants.

“and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as El Paran, which is by the wilderness.” Those were the kings

who fought with Chedorlaomer.

“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.” Sodom and her allies may’ve thought they had their opponent outnumbered – five to four... but not so.

“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 and Gomorrah were known for their sexual perversions.

Is it little wonder they got beat in battle? Men who lack moral courage seldom find courage for other areas of life. It’s ironic that the sexual deviants of Sodom and Gomorrah end up falling into the asphalt pits – 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 here comes their 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... Abram turns into Big Jake.

Verse 13, “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” when he crossed the Jordan, and entered the land of 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.

“(Abram) divided his forces against them by night,” Night warfare – Abram, a man of faith, again had no problems employing tactical military maneuvers. Hey, real faith is not a passive, inactive faith. Abram trusted in God, but did his part.

“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 by Chedorlaomer – four to one. But as Abram believed “one

plus God always equals a majority.”

“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 the word “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.” Here is the mysterious Melchizedek.

In the New Testament, in Hebrews 7, the writer tells us that Jesus was not a priest after the order of the Levites. He was a better priest - after the order of this man, Melchizedek. Under the Law of Moses kings were forbidden from being priests, but Melchizedek was different, he was both a king and a priest.

Thus, Jesus was a priest after the order of Melchizedek, not Levi.

Hebrews 7:3 reveals Melchizedek’s bizarre pedigree. He was “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 and no date of

death. As Hebrews says, he “remains a priest continually”. This has led some scholars to believe that Melchizedek was actually a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus.

Remember in John 8:56 Jesus said to the leaders of 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 to the meeting. He brings “bread and wine” – perhaps he and Abraham shared communion. It could be that Abraham knew a lot more about the Gospel than we might first assume.

Verse 20, “And he (Abram) gave him a tithe of all.” This is a big deal to the writer of Hebrews. He uses an argument that’s hard for use to understand.

It’s based more on Oriental logic than Western logic. But since, genetically speaking, the tribes of Israel were still in Abram’s loins, when he paid tithes to Melchizedek, Abram demonstrated that the priests after the order Melchizedek were superior to the Jewish priesthood who would later come from his lineage.

Thus, Jesus is a better priest than the Jewish priesthood... Here Melchizedek just pops onto the scene, but later he’ll become a pretty important character.

Verse 21, “Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.” 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." Abram preserves his integrity.

Unlike Lot who was willing to snuggle up to an evil Sodom to take advantage of its riches and conveniences – Abram wanted no part of anything Sodom had to offer. He wanted no association. He recognized its corrupting influences, and wanted no one to think that he had anything to do with Sodom or its king.

Abram preserved his integrity, whereas Lot was willing to compromise. And in the end both decisions had significant consequences – as we'll see next week...