

## **Rescue Me! 2-4-07**

### Genesis 14

Read Genesis 14. In previous chapters we have read about God's incredible promises to the man Abram. We saw how they greatly affect us, and that we are heirs of those same promises. (Galatians 3:29) As yet, Abram had no children to inherit the promises and bring them to pass; yet, he left his country and by faith followed the voice of God. He began to call on or proclaim the name of the LORD that was revealing Himself to Abram right in the midst of Canaanite idolatry. He built altars and staked out the land of promise. We saw God stretch Abram's faith with a famine that drove him down into Egypt. Instead of believing God's word, he leaned on his own cunning and put his wife at risk to save his own skin. Upon return to Canaan, he visited the altars he had made in the past. He graciously avoided conflict with his nephew, Lot, by letting him have the best of the land. We learned how we can resolve conflicts by trusting in God and being willing to be wronged even by brothers in Christ. God expanded His promises to Abram with more details than the past promises. Abram renewed His commitment to God with sacrifice.

The five kings that ruled the cities around the Dead Sea had been paying tribute to a confederation of nations in the North. This was common in the area for millennia. One power would rise up and subjugate the others and demand that taxes be paid. The subjugated powers would band together and rebel, refusing to pay taxes. Such rebellion was always met with force as in this story. The kings of Sodom had been subjugated for twelve years, and then they rebelled. The kings of the northern nations gathered their armies and prepared to deal with the insurrection.

Kedorlaomer (ked-or-law-o'-mer) was from what is today Iran. Amraphel from modern Iraq. The two other kings were from areas of modern Turkey. Their plan of attack was well thought out. First they attacked the giant Rephaites. Might as well get the big boys out of the way while your army is fresh and well stocked. This secured the Transjordan. Then they took the Horites in the area between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Akaba. They secured most of the Sinai Peninsula and part of the Negev and the Arabah. Then they took on the Amalekites and secured the Kadesh-barnea oasis. Finally they took the Amorites and Engedi. The five rebellious kings of Sodom were now surrounded and had nowhere to look for alliances or support.

The five kings of Sodom were quickly and brutally defeated. As they fled, Calvin's commentary says that some threw themselves in tar pits to die a quick death of suffocation rather than to face the enemy's brutality. Wars throughout the ages are brutal affairs. Men with power over others can be worse than animals. In all

**Commented [notes1]:** 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.  
Gal 3:29 (NIV)

this ugliness and death, Lot and his family were taken as slaves. Surely he witnessed things that made his heart tremble with fear.

Put yourself in Lot's sandals. What did he think as he was carried away with his family to be slaves in foreign land? Did he reflect on his choices? Did he consider how moving into Sodom for personal gain had put him in this predicament? Now the wealth he coveted belonged to others. Did he regret the day he left his uncle Abram? You wouldn't know it if it wasn't spelled out for us, but Lot is described as a righteous man. (2Peter 2:7) He would choose heaven over hell, but he wouldn't choose heaven over the world. Was he calling on YHWH, the God that Abram proclaimed?

**Commented [notes2]:** 7 and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men  
2 Peter 2:7 (NIV)

One of the survivors made his way to the camp of Abram. Abram could have said, "Lot chose that bed; let him sleep in it." He could have just figured it was the justice of God for compromising with the wicked people of Sodom. That would have been in line with his fear of harm when in Egypt. But we don't have even a hint of that. It is here that Abram is a picture of Christ. We have been taken captive by the enemy of our soul. For all intents and purposes we were slaves of sin. (John 8:34) But King Jesus wasn't content for the enemy to drag us off into slavery. He pursued him into battle to rescue us. Just when the enemy thought he had us for life, King Jesus swooped in and routed the enemy, setting us free. He could have pointed to all our compromises with the world. He could have left us to reap the consequences of our decisions. He could have said that our greed put us where we were, but He didn't. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us! (Romans 5:8)

**Commented [notes3]:** 34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin."  
John 8:34 (NIV)

**Commented [notes4]:** 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.  
Romans 5:8 (NIV)

Abram drew out 318 men born in his household. The camp of Abram had become quite large, but nothing compared to the hordes of the North. Tribes allied themselves with other tribes by covenant. Abram seems to have made such alliances with the Amorite brothers Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, but even with their help they would have been vastly outnumbered. (1Samuel 17:47)

**Commented [notes5]:** 47 All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."  
1 Sam 17:47 (NIV)

Abram had returned to walking by faith and not by sight. (2Corinthians 5:7) He was again confident in the promises God made to him. How could he risk going against such odds, such a superior fighting force? He believed God's word. He was the true king of the land, in spite of all the little city kings and their claims. God had given the land to him! And now he would defend it with the help of God Almighty, even against those powerful northern kings.

**Commented [notes6]:** 7 We live by faith, not by sight.  
2 Cor 5:7 (NIV)

The enemy had traveled about 120 miles, to the northern edge of the Promised Land. Abram and his men caught up with them there. Now, though he had once compromised to save his life, he would thrust himself into an impossible battle believing in the promises of God. How could his heirs inherit the land if he were dead before they were born? He pulled together the courage voiced in the motto

of the French Foreign Legion. "If I falter, push me on. If I stumble, pick me up. If I retreat, shoot me."

No doubt, the enemy, over confident with their success, was reveling in their victory and unprepared for what was about to happen. Under cover of darkness, Abram divided his force up into two groups and attacked. The enemy was completely routed and Abram's men pursued them even to the north of Damascus. It was a miraculous victory.

They took all the spoils of war, including the captives from Canaan, and started the 120-mile return trip. Upon arriving outside Jerusalem at the Shaveh Valley, two of the local kings met them. One was the King of Sodom who had escaped the battle. The other was the King of Salem, the early name of Jerusalem. (Psalm 76:2) His name was Melchizedek (mal-kee-tseh'-dek), or King of Righteousness. Salem means peace, so his title was King of Peace. But the text also says that he is a priest of God Most High (El Elyown). What a mysterious character! But wait till you hear what he does and says.

First, he offered him bread and wine. At the end of the service today, we will partake of the same. It was a victory meal, just as our communion meal is a victory meal. It celebrates our rescue from the enemy, just as they were celebrating the rescue of their citizens from their enemy.

<sup>19</sup> and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. Genesis 14:19 (NIV) He pronounced a blessing upon Abram, a blessing by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. I thought Abram was the main character in God's plan. The author of Hebrews tells us that greater blesses the lesser. (Hebrews 7:7) This priest of God is greater than Abram, who is the father of the people of faith!

**Commented [notes7]:** 7 And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. Heb 7:7 (NIV)

<sup>20</sup> And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything. Genesis 14:20 (NIV) He offers praise to the God who is sovereign over all for giving Abram victory. This king could see that it was not Abram but the blessing of God with Abram that made him victorious, so he praised God for that. Abram then gave him a tithe from the spoils. That means he gave ten percent of the take, but not just ten percent, the best ten percent. By doing so, Abram was acknowledging that he was a priest of the one true God.

Who is this character, Melchizedek? There are two main thoughts and many wacky ones. Some believe he is a Canaanite king who had a revelation of the true God. He sought and found the Creator of all and knew that this God was the Most High God. (Acts 10:34,35)

**Commented [notes8]:** 34 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. Acts 10:34-35 (NIV)

Another belief is that this is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. Just as Jesus appeared to Joshua (Joshua 5:15) and Isaac (Genesis 32:30) and all who saw a man that they called JHWH, Jesus was in Canaan proclaiming righteousness and peace to those who would listen.

**Commented [notes9]:** 15 The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.  
Josh 5:15 (NIV)

Those who prefer to see him as an ordinary man point to the word "like" in Hebrews 7, "like the Son of God". (Hebrews 7:3) The word is unique in the New Testament. They see the word as meaning "similar to" but not the same.

**Commented [notes10]:** 30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."  
Gen 32:30 (NIV)

Those who see him as the pre-incarnate Christ point to the lines in the book of Hebrews that claim he had no father or mother and without beginning of days, a priest forever. (Hebrews 7:3) Both viewpoints can defend their interpretation, so we will probably have to wait for heaven to know for sure. Whichever the case, he was certainly a person that excelled in his relationship to God. Even more than Abram, he was the declaration of righteousness and peace in an idolatrous world. (1Peter 2:12)

**Commented [notes11]:** 3 Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.  
Heb 7:3 (NIV)

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Abram has just encountered a kindred spirit. He has been blessed again by God through this priest of the Most High God. What a special moment! Enter the King of Sodom, Bera. Bera said, "I take people; you take property." Talk about coming down quickly from a worship experience! This vile man interrupts with what he thinks is a deal. Bera was probably thinking that people could continue to produce and be taxed. He wanted them back and thought Abram would be satisfied with material goods. What a stark contrast with what Abram just experienced with the King of Salem!

**Commented [notes13]:** 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.  
1 Peter 2:12 (NIV)

*22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath 23 that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich.' 24 I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me--to Aner, Eshcol and Mamre. Let them have their share." Genesis 14:22-24 (NIV) At sometime after learning about the victory of the Northern kings, Abram swore to God that he would take no spoils from the battle. Lot was willing to be enriched by living with temptation, but not Abram. He wanted nothing to do with their ill-gotten gains and wicked lifestyles. (Psalm 101:4) He saw the importance of keeping his testimony free from worldly gain. He already had the gain from the Egypt fiasco, and wanted nothing else like that. But he could not speak for his allies. They had a different motivation, and Abram would not interfere with them gaining spoils when they had risked their lives to join him in battle.*

**Commented [notes14]:** 4 Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil.  
Psalms 101:4 (NIV)

Abram was declaring his trust in the Lord and His word. His testimony challenges us to do the same. He would not depend on his ability but on the God who had

made such great promises to him. This is the same challenge we all face. Will we look to the world, to our ability, to a king of Sodom, to our own scheming, or to the Lord and his word? Will we walk by faith and not by sight? (Proverbs 3:5,6)

In closing, I would like for us to consider Melchizedek, whether a pre-incarnate Christ or a foreshadowing of Christ. His name meant King of Righteousness. Jesus is the righteous One. (Jeremiah 33:16) There is no righteousness apart from Him. (Romans 3:21) Without righteousness no one will see the Lord. That is why Jesus came to live a righteous life on your behalf. He gives you His righteousness when you give Him your sin. I know. It's not a fair deal, but He is willing, if you are. (Matthew 11:28-30)

He is the King of Peace. In that prophecy of Isaiah that foretold the names of the coming Messiah, one of them was the Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6) In this world the only peace that can fill the heart with real assurance is the peace of Christ. Jesus said that He gives us a peace that is unlike the world's peace. (John 14:27) It is a peace that passes understanding. (Philippians 4:7) Many in our world today attempt to occupy every waking moment with busyness so that they will not have to face their lack of peace. All they need to do is come to the source. He will be our source of peace in every situation life brings. He gives us peace with God (Romans 5:1), peace in our hearts, and peace with our fellow man.

Melchizedek was offering a prayer of blessing as priest of the Most High Creator. A priest is one who stands between God and man. Jesus is the One who ever lives to intercede for us as our Great High Priest. (Hebrews 7:25) At this moment, He is before the throne of God interceding for you and me. That intercession will never end. We'll be forever grateful because it will continue forever. Part of that intercession is Jesus' scars, the receipt for our redemption price. He will wear them throughout eternity. If anyone doubts the reason you are in heaven, they need only look there. (Revelation 5:6) (Isaiah 49:16)

Righteousness, peace, and intercession, is there anything we need more than these? They are yours in Christ Jesus.

When at last in heav'ns glory  
In His righteousness I'll stand  
Peace with God, eternal story  
Carved upon my Savior's hand

**Commented [notes15]:** 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.  
Prov 3:5-6 (NIV)

**Commented [notes16]:** 16 In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.'  
Jer 33:16 (NIV)

**Commented [notes17]:** 21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.  
Romans 3:21 (NIV)

**Commented [notes18]:** 28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."  
Matt 11:28-30 (NIV)

**Commented [notes19]:** 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Isaiah 9:6 (NIV)

**Commented [notes20]:** 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.  
John 14:27 (NIV)

**Commented [notes21]:** 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.  
Phil 4:7 (NIV)

**Commented [notes22]:** 1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Romans 5:1 (NIV)

**Commented [notes23]:** 25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.  
Heb 7:25 (NIV)

**Commented [notes24]:** 6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.  
Rev 5:6 (NIV)

**Commented [notes25]:** 16 See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.  
Isaiah 49:16 (NIV)