

“Blessed by Someone Greater” Text: Genesis 14; Hebrews 7:1-22

By Pastor Rand Lankheet, at New Horizon URC, First sermon, on March 18, 2018

Introduction: Canada is part of NATO. N—A—T--O. It stands for the “North Atlantic Treaty Organization.” It is an alliance among nations. It includes 26 nations. Each nation promises to fight for the other member nations, if one of them comes under attack.

In Genesis 14, we read about two alliances, two groups of nations who formed military alliances.

Now, those were not nations in the modern sense. Rather, they were large city-states.

In ancient days larger cities had their own kings. Those cities acted like separate nations.

In Genesis 14 we read that four city-states were in alliance against five city-states.

1. That’s the POLITICAL SITUATION. It’s our first point—the political situation.

A Group of 4 is fighting against a Group of 5. The main king of the Group of Four is named Kedorlaomer. Kenorlaomer is king of the ancient people known as the Elamites.

In his day he was a military genius. He won many important battles.

In vs. 5, we read that the armies of Kedorlaomer had defeated the Rephaites, the Zuzites, and many other armies in that day. Among those he defeated were these giant people... people who stood 8, 9, even 10 feet tall. Men like Goliath, in the days of David.

So King Kedorlaomer and his allies, controlled all the area around the Dead Sea.

You remember, perhaps, how the Jordan River flows to the south, from the Sea of Galilee. The river empties into the Dead Sea. Around the Dead Sea, were the city states of Sodom and Gomorrah, along with others. They had been conquered by Kedorlaomer.

In the custom of those days, conquered peoples were forced to pay tribute, or taxes, to the conqueror. High taxes. But finally those conquered peoples said:

“It is enough. We are not going to pay King Kedorlaomer any more money.”

So King Kedorlaomer called his allies together. That Group of Four.

And they made war against the Group of Five.

We read in vs. 10-11 that the 5 nation alliance was defeated by that Group of Four.

It was a total defeat. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah ran for their lives.

King Kedorlaomer won a total victory on that day.

And he was going to teach those rebels a lesson.

They would never dare to rebel against him again.

King Kedorlaomer marched into their territory.

And he took almost everything the people owned. Everything of value. He took their food, their gold and silver, their expensive clothing, and their herds of cattle. In addition, the king took some of the leading men of each city. Perhaps to hold them for ransom. To hold these men, until their families would pay thousands of dollars, to purchase their freedom.

One of the leading men taken away, was Abraham’s nephew, Lot.

As we learned previously, Lot gradually moved closer to Sodom. And eventually he moved into the city of Sodom. Lot became like a city councillor, helping to supervise that very wicked city of Sodom. Lot refused to focus on the things of the Lord. He had refused to stay connected to God’s covenant, through Abraham. Lot was focused mostly on money, on financial success and prosperity. As a result, he is being punished.

But uncle Abraham still loves his nephew. Abraham plans how to rescue his nephew.

We read in vs. 14, that Abraham raised a small army of 318 trained men. Notice that the verse says these men were all raised in Abraham’s household. You see what a large group of servants Abraham had, by that time. Though he was living in less fertile land than Lot, yet, under God’s blessing, he was prospering. He had put God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness first. And as a result, all the other things in life were falling in place.

Well, to make a long story short, Abraham with his small army defeats the powerful king

Kedorlaomer. It was a complete victory. Now we read that the soldiers of Kedorlaomer are running. Running for their lives! Of course, this is because God gave the victory to Abraham.

Not only does Abraham rescue his nephew, and all of his nephew’s possessions.

We read that Abraham also rescues the other captives, of the other cities.

He frees the other captives, along with all their possessions.

2. But here's the second thing we note: Abraham now faces A NATURAL TEMPTATION. [Rep. Abraham returns home as a hero...a military hero. He and his men had defeated the most powerful king in that entire region. So now Abraham is regarded as the most powerful king.

In the custom of that day, the other kings want Abraham to keep all the treasure he had recovered in war. The spoils of war belong to the victor.

But who, exactly, is wanting to reward Abraham? Look at vs. 21. It is the king of Sodom.

The king of Sodom wants to reward Abraham.

Now don't minimize this temptation. To go into battle takes money. It takes lots of money.

Money to equip your men. Money to supply your men. And, while his men are traveling into battle, and fighting, they obviously don't have time to take care of the herds and the flocks back home. That also takes money out of Abraham's pocket.

So Abraham surely would have been within his right to seek some compensation.

For his expenses. For his costs.

And the king of Sodom encourages Abraham to take the money; to take the spoils of war.

But what does Abraham say? Look at vss. 22 and following. Basically, Abraham says this to the king of Sodom: "I have taken an oath before the Lord, God Most High.

I will accept nothing that belongs to you, O king. I will accept nothing except what my men have already eaten. And, yes, I need to reward my military leaders.

They deserve something. But for myself, I will take nothing."

Why does Abraham say this?

His reason is found at the end of vs. 23. He says: "I don't want you, king of Sodom, to say someday that you have made me rich."

People love to take the credit, don't they?

Someone has said: "Success has a hundred fathers. But failure is an orphan."

No one wants to take the blame for failure.

But everyone wants to take credit for someone else's success!

Someday, the king of Sodom could claim that he had made Abraham rich. Abraham doesn't want to risk that. He wants to be able to give all the credit to the Lord. The Most High God.

Abraham knows that it all came from the Lord.

The Lord had called Abraham from a faraway land.

The Lord had given Abraham a new land. A large and prosperous land.

The Lord promised Abraham many, many descendants.

And to make his descendants into a great nation.

Abraham didn't want the pagan, wicked king of Sodom to take any credit.

Abraham wanted the glory to go only to the Lord. He wanted people to know that the Lord, and only the Lord, was good to him. And the Lord's goodness to him.

Application: Brothers and sisters, how much credit do you give to the Lord?

And how much credit do you take for yourself? It is so easy, isn't it, to point to ourselves. To say, or to think, "Look at me. Look at what I have accomplished. I have worked hard. I made smart decisions. I have been so successful." But who has given you health? Who has given you your many opportunities? There are many other people in the world smarter than you. They work harder than you. But, they do not have your money. Ultimately, isn't all our outward success due to the Lord and His providence in our lives?

In my church in California, I recall overhearing a conversation between two older immigrants.

One said to the other: "What did we know when we immigrated? We had no money. We had no education. All we knew was how to milk cows." Yes, they were hard workers. But they had no way of knowing that the land on which their cows were standing, would become worth millions of dollars. As Los Angeles grew...and as more homes had to be built. And some of them made millions twice over. Their first land, was worth millions. Their later land, further out of the city,

became worth tens of millions of dollars. The one older man was giving all the credit to God—to God’s sovereign plan.

Abraham rightly gave the credit to God. The money was not due to the generosity of a wicked king. It came only from the gracious hand of God.

3. But now in the text we are introduced to another king. He is King Melchizedek.

He is the king of a city known as Salem. Evidently that was the old name of the city of Jerusalem. Jerus-Salem.

There is much mystery here...about this man, Melchizedek.

Somehow this king knows about the true God. Not only does he know the true God. He blesses, or praises, the true God. And he blesses Abraham. [Read vs. 19-20.

Not only does Melchizedek give a blessing. He receives a blessing.

Look at the last part of vs. 20. Abraham gives him ten percent of the plunder of battle. Ten percent. What is that? That is the tithe. Abraham is tithing to Melchizedek.

Who is the greater? The one who GIVES the tithe...or the one who RECEIVES the tithe?

It is the one who receives the tithe! We can say that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham. What a mystery!

But this is explained for us in Hebrews chapter 7. Turn there...[read 7:1-17.

There is too much here, to go into detail. But the writer is making a comparison between King Melchizedek and Jesus. Melchizedek is a type, or foreshadowing, of Jesus.

How is that? Well, consider his name. Melchi-zedek, means, “king of righteousness.”

Jesus has come to earth as our king of righteousness. Crediting us with his very own righteousness.

And, this man was also the king of Salem. Salem, or in the Hebrew, Shalom.

It means peace. Through Jesus, through his finished work, we are reconciled to God.

By faith in Jesus, justified, we have peace with God.

The writer of the Hebrews, tells us to think more deeply. To consider this.

Jesus did not descend from the line of the Jewish priests. In the old covenant. Those priests were descendants of Levi, one of the sons of Jacob. Jesus, instead, is more in the line of Melchizedek.

Therefore, says Hebrews, Jesus is a much better priest. He is priest of the new covenant!

Abraham was showing the greatness of Melchizedek by giving a tithe to Melchizedek.

It was like Abraham was honoring Jesus in that action. The lesser one, Abraham, was giving the tithe to the greater one, to Jesus. Jesus symbolically is from the line of Melchizedek.

Look at vs. 17, a quote from Psalm 110.

That whole psalm prophesies so much about Jesus, and about the work of Jesus.

Psalm 110 is the most quote psalm in the entire NT. Psalm 110 a psalm of David, begins:

“The LORD says to my Lord, Sit at my right hand.” The LORD God, the Father, says to David’s lord, Jesus, “Sit at my right hand.” Jesus ascending to heaven took that place of honor and glory at the right hand of his Father.

And the LORD, the Father God, said of His Son Jesus:

“You, Jesus, are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

Jesus, the true king of righteousness. Righteous, perfect in himself. Righteous in all his thoughts, words, and deeds. And God the Father crediting the righteousness of Jesus, to everyone who truly believes in him. That’s justification, the crediting of Jesus’ righteousness to us who trust in Jesus.

And apostle Paul says this in Romans 5:1: “Therefore, being justified by faith [faith in Jesus] we now have peace with God.” We have shalom with God. We have “salem” with God.

God’s wrath against us is turned aside from us. His wrath was poured out upon Jesus, on the cross. So that instead of wrath, we now experience God’s full peace. Jesus the King of Salem. Jesus the King of Peace.

By faith, Abraham was trusting in Jesus. Oh, he didn’t know all the details.

Abraham was living in the time of the shadows. He could see something about Jesus, but he

could see it only dimly. We however, are given the full light of Jesus. To us, the whole plan of salvation has been revealed.

May we trust in Jesus completely, by faith. And may we give to Jesus, and to God our Father, all the credit. The credit for our salvation, our righteousness.

And the credit for all the good things that happen to us in this life. All that we accomplish.

Ultimately, everything comes to us through the plan and purpose of our God. LET US PRAY.

PAGE \\* MERGEFORMAT 3

PAGE \\* MERGEFORMAT 3