

# I Connect Sunday School Lesson for Jun 20, 2021

## Praises and Concerns

### Genesis 14

War breaks out between international coalitions, and a battle takes place in the Siddim Valley (where the dead sea is) near Abram and Lot. Abram musters a small force to rescue Lot, who is now said to be living in Sodom. Afterward, King Melchizedek of Salam, a high priest, blesses Abram. This reference may have been included to give validity to the priesthood.

In Christianity, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews, Jesus Christ is identified as "High priest forever in the order of Melchizedek", and so Jesus assumes the role of High Priest once and for all.

### Verse 1

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

We have here an account of the first war that we read of in scripture, in which we may observe:

1. The parties engaged in it. The invaders were four kings; two of them no less than kings of Shinar and Elam - That is, Chaldea and Persia; yet probably not the sovereign princes of those great kingdoms, but rather the heads of some colonies which came from there, and settled themselves near Sodom, but retained the names of the countries from which they had their original.

The invaded were the kings of five cities that lay near together in the plain of Jordan, Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar.

2. The occasion of this war was, the revolt of the five kings from under the government of Chedorlaomer.

None of these kings can be identified outside of Biblical history.

### Verse 4

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

*Twelve years they served him* — The Sodomites were the posterity of Canaan, whom Noah had pronounced a servant to Shem, from whom Elam descended. (Chedorlaomer and his allies were probably trying to control the copper mines south of the Dead Sea.) In the

thirteenth year, beginning to be weary of their subjection, they rebelled - Denied their tribute, and attempted to shake off the yoke.

## Verse 5

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

*In the fourteenth year* — After some pause and preparation, Chedorlaomer, in conjunction with his allies, set himself to reduce the revolters. The four kings laid the neighbouring countries waste, and enriched themselves with the spoil of them, [Genesis 14:5,6,7](#). Upon the alarm of which, the king of Sodom and his allies went out and were routed.

## Verse 12

Now the Siddim Valley was filled with tar pits. When the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah retreated, they fell into them; and the rest fled to the mountains.

## Verse 13

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

We have here an account of the only military action we ever find Abram engaged in; and this he was not prompted to by avarice or ambition, but purely by a principle of charity – to rescue his nephew, Lot, in a raid on the withdrawing victorious forces.

## Verse 14

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

*He armed his trained servants, born in his house* — Numbered three hundred and eighteen: a great family, but a small army. He drew out his trained servants, or his catechized servants; not only instructed in the art of war, but also instructed in the principles of religion; for Abram commanded his household to keep the way of the Lord.

## Verse 16

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

*His brother Lot* — That is, his kinsman (actually, his nephew)

## Verse 18

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

The Rabbins say that Melchizedek was Shem the son of Noah, who was king and priest to those that descended from him, according to the patriarchal model. Many Christian writers have thought that this was an appearance of the Son of God himself, our Lord Jesus, known to Abram at this time by this name. But as nothing is expressly revealed concerning it, we can determine nothing. He brought forth bread and wine - for the refreshment of Abram and his soldiers, and in congratulation of their victory. This he did as a king. As priest of the most high God, he blessed Abram.

## Verse 19

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

*Blessed be Abram, of the most high God* — Observe the titles he here gives to God, which are very glorious:

1. The most high God, which speaks his absolute perfections in himself, and his sovereign dominion over all the creatures
2. *Possessor of heaven and earth* — That is, rightful owner and sovereign Lord of all the creatures; because he made them.

## Verse 20

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

*And blessed be the most high God* — Note:

1. In all our prayers, we must praise God, and join hallelujahs with all our hosannas. These are the spiritual sacrifices we must offer up daily, and upon particular occasions
2. God as the most high God must have the glory of all our victories. In them he shows himself higher than our enemies, and higher than we, for without him, we could do nothing.

*And he gave him tithes of all* — That is, of the spoils, [Hebrews 7:4](#). This may be looked upon:

1. As a gratuity presented to Melchizedek, by way of return for his respect.
2. As an offering dedicated to the most high God, and therefore put into the hands of Melchizedek his priest. Jesus Christ, our great Melchizedek, is to be humbly acknowledged by every one of us as our king and priest, and we should give a tithe of all we have.

## Verse 21

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

## Verse 22

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

*I have lifted up mine hand to the Lord that I will not take anything — Here Observe,*

1. The titles he gives to God, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth - The same that Melchizedek had just now used. It is good to learn of others how to order our speech concerning God, and to imitate those who speak well in divine things.
2. The ceremony used in this oath; I have lifted up my hand - In religious swearing we appeal to God's knowledge of our truth and sincerity, and incite his wrath if we swear falsely; and the lifting up of the hands is expressive of both.

## Verse 23

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

*From a thread to a shoe-latchet —* Not the least thing that had ever belonged to the king of Sodom.

*Lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich —* Probably, Abram knew the king of Sodom to be a proud and scornful man, and one that would be apt to turn such a thing as this to his reproach afterwards, and when we have to do with such men, we have need to act with particular caution.

## Genesis 15

God has promised Abram land and children, and tied them together as dual gifts – the promised land will be given to Abram's seed. Together they will become a blessing for all families of the earth. As wonderful as these promises are, Abram has had few assurances. Here the promises of children and land are each in turn confirmed by a

revelation about God's nature and identity, first in 15:1-6 and then in 15:7-21. Each time, a divine self-disclosure prompts a question from Abram, which then leads to a dialogue between God and Abram, and finally to a confirmation of the promise. Each dialogue between God and Abram leads the patriarch to new levels of theological understanding and commitment.

## Verse 1

**After these things, the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.**

This is the first great "I am" statement of divine revelation.

*And it occurs after these things:*

1. After that act of generous charity which Abram had done, in rescuing his neighbors, God made him this gracious visit.
2. After that victory which he had obtained over four kings; lest Abram should be too much elevated with that, God comes to tell him he had better things in store for him.

*The word of the Lord came unto Abram* — That is, God manifested himself to Abram, in a vision - Which supposes Abram awake, and some sensible token of the presence of the divine glory, saying, Fear not Abram - Abram might fear lest the four kings he had routed, should rally and fall upon him. No, saith God, fear not: fear not their revenge, nor thy neighbor's envy; I will take care of thee.

*I am thy shield* — Or, emphatically, I am a shield to thee, present with thee, actually defending thee. The consideration of this, that God himself is a shield to his people, to secure them from all destructive evils, a shield ready for them, and a shield round about them, should silence all perplexing fears.

*And thy exceeding great reward* — God himself is the felicity (intense happiness) of holy souls; He is the portion of their inheritance, and their cup.

## Verse 3

**And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house will be my heir (Eliezer).**

*Behold to me thou hast given no seed* — Not only no son, but no seed. If he had had a daughter, from her the promised Messiah might have come, who was to be the Seed of the Woman; but he had neither son nor daughter.

The head of his household, Eliezer, will be his heir.

## Verse 4

**The Lord's word came immediately to him, "This man will not be your heir. Your heir will definitely be your own biological child."**

## Verse 5

**And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.**

*And he brought him forth* — It seems, early in the morning, and said, look now toward heaven, and tell the stars: so shall thy seed be –

1. So innumerable, for so the stars seem to a common eye. Abram feared he should have no child at all, but God tells him his descendents should be so many as not to be numbered
2. So illustrious, as the stars of heaven for splendour; for to them pertained the glory, [Romans 9:4](#). Abram's seed according to the flesh were like the dust of the earth, [Genesis 13:16](#), but his spiritual seed are like the stars of heaven.

## Verse 6

**And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.**

*And he believed in the Lord* — That is, believed the truth of that promise which God had now made him, resting upon the power, and faithfulness of him that made it. (See how the apostle in Romans magnifies this faith of Abram, and makes it a standing example, [Romans 4:19-21](#).) He was not weak in faith; he staggered not at the promise: he was strong in faith; he was fully persuaded. Pray that the Lord will work such a faith in every one of us.

*And he counted it to him for righteousness* — That is, he was accepted of God, and, by faith he obtained witness that he was righteous, [Hebrews 11:4](#). This is urged in the New Testament to prove, that we are justified by faith without the works of the law, [Romans 4:3](#); [Galatians 3:6](#), for Abram was so justified.

The "works of the law" are the actions performed to fulfill the Mosaic Law found in the first five books of the Old Testament. Keeping the Sabbath, being circumcised (the issue before the Galatian churches), eating "clean" foods, and other ceremonies are powerless to justify us in the sight of God. In addition, following the morality of the law (not murdering, not committing adultery, not stealing) is insufficient to make us right in God's eyes. No act on the part of sinful creatures can result in God's declaring them to be righteous in His sight.

Why can't the works of the law save us? First, because the works of the law can never be done completely. The standard is perfection, and that means "good enough" won't pass muster. Paul explains to the Galatians: "All who rely on the works of the law are under a

curse, as it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law’” (Galatians 3:10, emphasis added). James further explains that anyone who offends in just one point is guilty of breaking the whole of the law (James 2:10). There are over six hundred individual commandments in the Mosaic Law, and breaking just one of them one time renders a person guilty. No one but Jesus ever kept the law perfectly.

## Verses 7-21

God confirms the “land” promise in a solemn covenant with Abram, anticipating and authenticating Israel’s later covenant at Mt. Saini.

### Verse 7

**And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.**

This is the second “I am” statement of divine revelation.

*I am the lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees* — Out of the fire of the Chaldees: that is, from their idolatries; for the Chaldeans worshipped the fire.

*To give thee this land to inherit it* — Not only to possess it, but to possess it as an inheritance, which is the surest title.

### Verse 8

**And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?**

*Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?* — This did not proceed from distrust of God's power or promise, but he desired this:

1. For the strengthening of his own faith. He believed, [Genesis 15:6](#), but here he prays, Lord help me against my unbelief, Now, he believed, but he desired a sign to use in case of an hour of temptation.
2. For the ratifying of the promise to his posterity, that they also might believe it.

### Verse 9

**And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.**

*Take me an heifer* — Perhaps Abram expected some sign from heaven, but God gives him a sign upon a sacrifice. Those that would receive the assurances of God's favor, must attend rituals, and expect to meet with God in them. Observe,

1. God appointed that each of the beasts used for his service should be three years old, because then they were at their full growth and strength. God must be served with the best we have.
2. We do not read that God gave Abram particular directions how to manage these, knowing that he was well versed in the custom of sacrifices.
3. Abram took them as God appointed him, though as yet he knew not how these things should become a sign to him.
4. Abram, having prepared according to God's appointment, set himself to expect what sign God would give him by these.

## Verse 12

**And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him.**

*And when the sun was going down* — About the time of the evening oblation. Early in the morning, while the stars were yet to be seen, God had given him orders concerning the sacrifices, [Genesis 15:5](#), and we may suppose it was at least his morning's work to prepare them, and set them in order; which when he had done, he abode by them praying and waiting 'till towards evening.

*A deep sleep fell upon Abram* — Not a common sleep through weariness or carelessness, but a divine extasy, where he might be wholly taken up with the contemplation of things spiritual. The doors of the body were locked up, that the soul might be private and might act more freely.

*And lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him* — This was designed to strike an awe upon the spirit of Abram, and to possess him with a holy reverence. Holy fear prepares the soul for holy joy; God humbles first, and then lifts up.

## Verse 13

**And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;**

*Thy seed shall be strangers* — So they were in Canaan first, [Psalm 105:11,12](#), and afterwards in Egypt: before they were lords of their own land, they were strangers in a strange land. The inconveniences of an unsettled state make a happy settlement the more welcome. Thus the heirs of heaven are first strangers on earth.

*And them they shall serve* — So they did the Egyptians, [Exodus 1:13](#).



*And they shall afflict them* — See [Exodus 1:11](#). Those that are blessed and beloved of God are often afflicted by wicked men. This persecution began with mocking, when Ishmael the son of an Egyptian, persecuted Isaac, [Genesis 21:9](#), and it came at last to murder, the basest of murders, that of their new born children; so that more or less it continued 400 years.

## Verse 14

**And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.**

*That nation whom they shall serve, even the Egyptians, will I judge* — This points at the plagues of Egypt, by which God not only constrained the Egyptians to release Israel, but punished them for all the hardships they had put upon them. The punishing of persecutors is the judging of them; it is a righteous thing with God, and a particular act of justice, to recompense tribulation to those that trouble his people.

*And afterwards shall they come out with great substance* — The deliverance of Abram's seed out of Egypt. Either after they have been afflicted 400 years, or, after the Egyptians are judged and plagued.

## Verse 15

**And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.**

*Thou shalt go to thy fathers* — At death we go to our fathers, to all our fathers that are gone before us to the state of the dead, to our godly fathers that are gone before us to the state of the blessed. The former helps to take off the terror of death, the latter puts comfort into it.

*Thou shalt be buried in a good old age* — Old age is a blessing, if it be a good old age: theirs may be called a good old age.

## Verse 16

**But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.**

At the time of Abraham 2000 BC, the Amorites lived in Hazazon-tamar (Genesis 14:7) (which is also known as Engedi: (2 Chron 20:2). Engedi is a large active oasis on the western shore of the Dead Sea directly across from the Arnon River. The Amorites were likely the largest of the 7 nations that God displaced for Israel out of Canaan.

## Verse 17

**And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces (sacrifices).**

*When the sun was gone down, the sign was given*

1. The smoking furnace signified the affliction of his seed in Egypt: they were there in the furnace of affliction, and laboring in the very fire. They were there in the smoke, their eyes darkened that they could not see to the end of their troubles
2. The burning lamp speaks comfort in this affliction; and this God shewed Abram at the same time with the smoking furnace. The lamp notes direction in the smoke; God's word was their lamp, a light shining in a dark place. Perhaps too this burning lamp prefigured the pillar of a cloud and fire which led them out of Egypt.
3. The passing of these between the pieces was the confirming of the covenant God now made with him. It is probable this furnace and lamp, which passed between the pieces, burned and consumed them, and so completed the sacrifice, and testified God's acceptance of it.

## **Verse 18**

**In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:**

In that same day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land - He had said before, To thy seed will I give this land, but here he saith, I have given it.

### **Prayer:**

The Lord bless us and keep us;

the Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us;

the Lord lift up his countenance upon us and give us peace.