

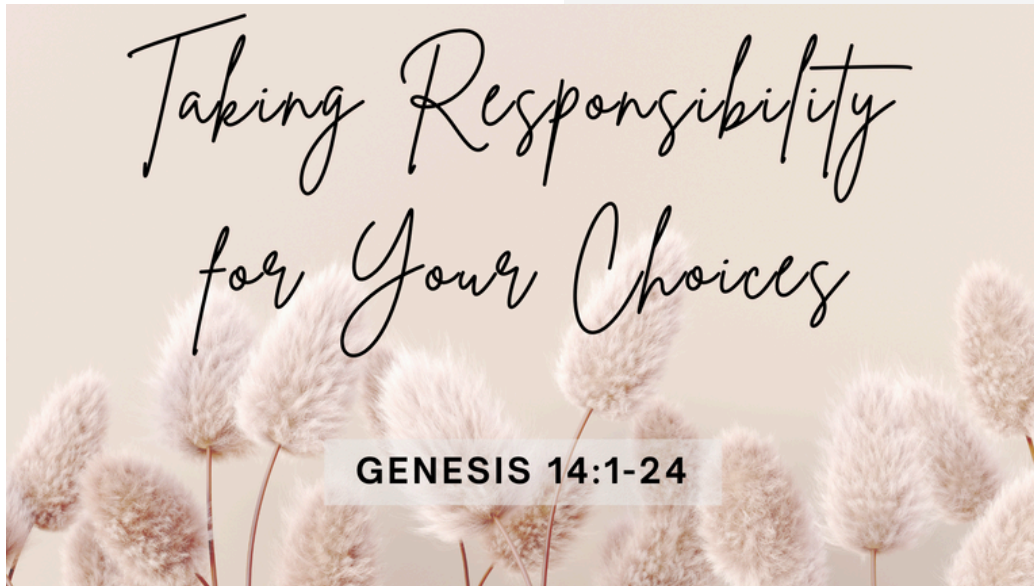
CCLEB SERMON NOTES



SUNDAY JULY 27, 2025
GENESIS 14

PASTOR DUANE MILLER

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR CHOICES



Sometimes the consequences of our choices keep appearing the rest of our lives. Abram's choice to bring Lot with him – had consequences that appear and reappear in his lifetime and long after. Abram was called by God to go to Canaan in **Genesis 12:1** leaving his father and family behind. Abram chose to take his father and nephew Lot along. Abram chose to disobey, he chose to bring Lot along. And both he and Lot, and the future nation of Israel pay for that choice several times over. Choices have consequences.

**Choices have
consequences.**



In the Abram narrative thus far, after Abram arrived in the promise land, we learn in Chapter 12 that a famine forced them to go to Egypt. In the language of having choice, Abram “chose” to leave Canaan where he was called to, and chose to flee the famine by going to Egypt. He chose “fleeing” rather than trusting in God to provide. Abram took Lot with him. In Egypt Abram chose to lie about his beautiful wife Sarai, so that Pharaoh wouldn't kill him. Sarai was taken into Pharaoh's palace for Pharaoh's pleasure – and in payment for Sarai, Pharaoh made Abram very rich with animals, cattle, camels and servants. But God condemned Pharaoh for taking another man's wife, and sent plagues upon Pharaoh and Egypt.

The plagues were effective in that Pharaoh realized he was deceived by Abram, Pharaoh released Sarai back to Abram, and released Abram to return to Canaan along with his wife and all of their loot that Pharaoh had given them. Abram in essence sold his wife and became rich, and then received his wife back.

Now - it may be tempting to think that they went to Egypt to escape a famine, had a little problem with Pharaoh and came back extraordinarily wealthy...what is wrong with that? Well, despite the awfulness of this event for Sarai, consider from this point on the progressive decline of Lot's life. From this point on, Abram and Lot separate, Lot goes to Sodom, and Abram has to intervene twice on Lot's behalf.

Chapter 13:2, 5 opens up with Abram and Lot thanks to Pharaoh, both very wealthy, with flocks, and tents and servants - so much so that Lot's clan and Abram's clan were too big for the land to support them both. The clans ended up fighting over turf and water and Abram graciously separated from Lot, letting Lot choose any place Lot wanted. Lot chose the luscious Jordan valley in the vicinity of Sodom. This was Lot's first choice participating in his decline and his choice affects Abram. This is one of the ways there were consequences for Abram choosing to disobey God and bring Lot along. The bounty Abram and Lot received from Egypt caused division in Abram's family, resulting in Lot choosing to live near Sodom.

Our chapter for today **14:1** starts with the phrase "about this time...". So in context we have Abram living peacefully in the highlands, the land God called him to, the land God promised him, and Lot living in the valley near the city of Sodom. Keep Lot and Abram's locations in mind as we work through **verses 1-12**.



So war breaks out between kings. Four kings from the east come and attack five kings at the valley south of the dead sea. One of those five kings being the king of Sodom, and Sodom being where Lot lives. For context these kings and their kingdoms are "city states"... not necessarily king over a country as we think of them today - these were much smaller - city -states.

Chapter 14 has a lot of names and places - some may be unfamiliar to us. However these names of Kings and where they are from add texture to the story that is helpful. Let me show you.

The first King listed is King Amraphel of Babylon. (SL Babylon) The Hebrew says "plains of Shinar"

which is ancient Babylonia, sometimes called Mesopotamia. Southern Babylonia - also known as "Ur of the Chaldeans" is where Abram was called out of.



The plains of Shinar or Babylonia...is where they built the Tower of Babel (**Chapter 11**) , and is also where Nimrod (**Chapter 10**) built kingdoms. This is Nimrod who built empires that would be enemies of the descendants of Abram, enemies of God's people, and enemies of the Kingdom of Peace. ["Babylon" in **1 Peter 5:13** and seven places in **Revelation** represent godless empires and powerful world systems that are the enemy of Jesus and the Kingdom of Peace.]

So the first king in **verse 1** is Amraphel - of Babylon. The meaning of the name Amraphel is uncertain.. However the Jewish Midrash from the 5th Century AD - **Genesis Rabbah 42:5** says: "Amraphel is Nimrod. [Why is he called Amraphel? Because he said (amar) to Abraham, 'Fall (phel) into the fiery furnace.] King Amraphel of Babylon is a clear enemy of Abram and his descendants.

The Jewish Midrash from the 5th Century AD -
Genesis Rabbah 42:5 says "Amraphel is Nimrod.
Why is he called Amraphel? Because he said (amar)
to Abraham, 'Fall (phel) into the fiery furnace."

Now another interesting King in verse one (**verse 1**) is Chedorlaomer of Elam - which is modern Iran. His name in Akkadian means "Servant of Lagamar". Lagamar is the Elamite god known for being the god who does not forgive.

Chedorlaomer

King Chedorlaomer of Elam – Elam is modern day Iran. His name in Akkadian means "Servant of Lagamar".

Lagamar is the Elamite god known for being the god who does not forgive.



Several other names in **verse 2** also provide texture and context to our story: Bera King of Sodom and Birsha king of Gomorrah. As would be expected with being a king of the infamous Sodom and Gomorrah - the name "Bera" means "son of evil". With that name meaning "son of evil". The other king is "Birsha" king of Gomorrah. The name "Birsha" means "in wickedness". Those name meanings of the kings provide some insight into the evil and wickedness in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Bera King of Sodom

the name “Bera”
means “son of evil”



Birsha King of Gomorrah

“Birsha” means
“in wickedness”

The names of the cities “Sodom and Gomorrah” themselves foreshadow their later judgement. “Sodom” means “burning/scorched” and “Gomorrah” means “overwhelming ruin”. We know the “burning/scorching” and “ruin” of Sodom and Gomorrah happen later in **Genesis 19:24**.



- **Sodom** means “burning/scorched”
- **Gomorrah** means “overwhelming ruin”

The names of the cities “Sodom and Gomorrah” themselves foreshadow their later judgement. “Sodom” means “burning/scorched” and “Gomorrah” means “overwhelming ruin”. We know the “burning/scorching” and “ruin” of Sodom and Gomorrah happen later in **Genesis 19:24**.

[And one more meaning of names in this long list to give you a feel for the emotional venom in this passage is the name-“Shinab” King of Admah - “Shinab” means “hated by father”. Imagine that hurt!]

“Shinab”

means “hated by father”

So there is a lot of godlessness, and darkness and evil and hatred and hurt within all these kings in the first half of **Genesis 14**.

And we learn from **Genesis 14:4**... that all these kings listed in **chapter 14** up to this point have all been subject to Kedorlaomer for at least 12 years. That phrase "subject to" is important.

"Subject to" means they pay tribute to Kedorlaomer in the form of trade or money.. It's a heavy, burdensome tax. And if they - these eight kings subject to him - don't pay Kedorlaomer their tax, then he comes with his army and punishes them.

For those that need a visual to understand this, in the Calvin & Hobbes comic King Kedorlaomer is a "Moe", the playground bully who regularly takes Calvin's lunch money. The Babylonians operated this way, the later Assyrians operated this way, the Romans at the time of Jesus operated this way, and the future antichrist from the future Babylon will operate this way as well. Bullying is how the empire operates.

So at the time that Abram was living peacefully in the promise land in **Genesis 14**, King Kedorlaomer was the top dog of the east city states.. including the Jordan Valley. Kedorlaomer had many other kings subject to him in his empire - Kedorlaomer was, you could say, "a king of kings".

Well **verse 2 - verse 4** tells us that five of the eight kings local to Abram, that were subject to King Kedorlaomer, rebelled after twelve years of being subject and paying tribute to Kedorlaomer.

And so in response to disrupting his order, King Kedorlaomer does what bullies do to kids who don't give their lunch money - he brings his mighty army from way over in Babylon to punish - to punish - the five rebelling kings.



Well how strong is Kedorlaomer that he could punish other Kings? We see in **verses 5-7** that while Kedorlaomer is in route to fight the five rebel kings in the Valley of the Salt Sea - he just happens to defeat six other mighty nations, sort of, along the way - adding to the size of his empire that is subject to him.

And to make it even more clear the extent of Kedorlaomer's strength, three of those nations he defeated along the way were races of giants. In **verse 5-6** the giants were the Rephaim, the Zuzim, and the Emim - races of giants post flood. And Kedorlaomer beats them. What's the quote? "The bigger they are the ____ they fall." The other quote that may fit is "Just because you're big doesn't mean you're smart". (Say's the guy who is only 5 '9").

So on the heels of all that battle success, Kedorlaomer - whose name means servant of a god who does not forgive, with his victorious army - comes to the valley of the salt sea to squash the rebellion.

In **verse 8** we see the armies "prepare for battle" other translations say "drew up their battle lines". Interesting about 1000 years later David in **Psalms 23** uses the same Hebrew word meaning "prepared for battle" in **Psalm 23:5 NIV** "you prepare a table before me". Both **Genesis 14:8** and **Psalms 23:5** are in the presence of enemies, so which would you rather?.. You prepare a battle line in the face of your enemy? Or have the LORD prepare a table for you and in the face of your enemies?

Now back in **Genesis 14:8** In my head the two armies look lopsided. And if I was in that battle, I would do just like we see the rebel kings do in **verse 10** "Run"! The old proverb "He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day" is true - at least for Bera King of Sodom, who survived because he shows up again later.



Now besides the fleeing and falling in the tar pits we don't have any other details of the battle. And then **verse 11** tells us that the victorious Kedorlaomer and his army plunder Sodom and Gomorrah and head for home. Kedorlaomer, who serves a god who does not forgive, accomplished what he wanted to accomplish – squash the rebellion and leave victoriously with more loot and slaves and possessions.

From an objective position - up until this point in the text it just seems like this is a historical account of evil kings fighting evil kings for power and possessions. So what does this have to do with Abram and us?

Remember – **chapter 14** opens with Abram living peacefully in the Judean highlands – and Lot lives in the vicinity of Sodom. **Genesis 14:12-16**

So Lot, who Abram chose to disobey God and bring along to Canaan, the promise land; and Lot who, when Abram chose not to trust the LORD in the famine, also went with Abram to Egypt; and Lot who leaving Egypt became very wealthy. And Lot whose wealth caused a need for a separation between him and Abram because the land couldn't support them both, and that resulted in Lot moving to Sodom; that same Lot and all his possessions... tents, cattle, servants were taken into captivity by evil King Kedorlaomer. Whose choices resulted in Lot being taken captive, Abram's or Lot's?

So in **verse 14-16** Abram, who is well into his seventies or older, goes into full special ops mode... Abram takes his 318 trained, select warriors from his own clan, and tracks down the mighty Kedorlaomer—overtaking them in Dan. Kedorlaomer's army flees, Abram chased them the whole way north of Damascus to Hobah. That's an estimated distance of 250 miles from where Abram started. And there God gave Abram victory and Abram recovered Lot and all Lot's possessions and all the possessions of Sodom, Gomorrah which included captives.



318 warriors defeat the powerful army of Kedorlaomer. Given the buildup in **verses 2-8** of Kedorlaomer's strength, Abram's victory has to be seen as miraculous in the context. And note Abram's battle is the first battle in the battle of God's people against evil empire.

This miraculous battle that God won through Abram is a foreshadowing of all the battles of Israel in the rest of the bible when the LORD is fighting for them. And this battle is a foreshadowing of the final battle. Here's a truth to hold on to...when God fights for His people God wins!

This story could end here, but it doesn't. Abram is a hero, but now he is going to be faced with another choice, another test or temptation, if you will, and this has to do with power and possessions.

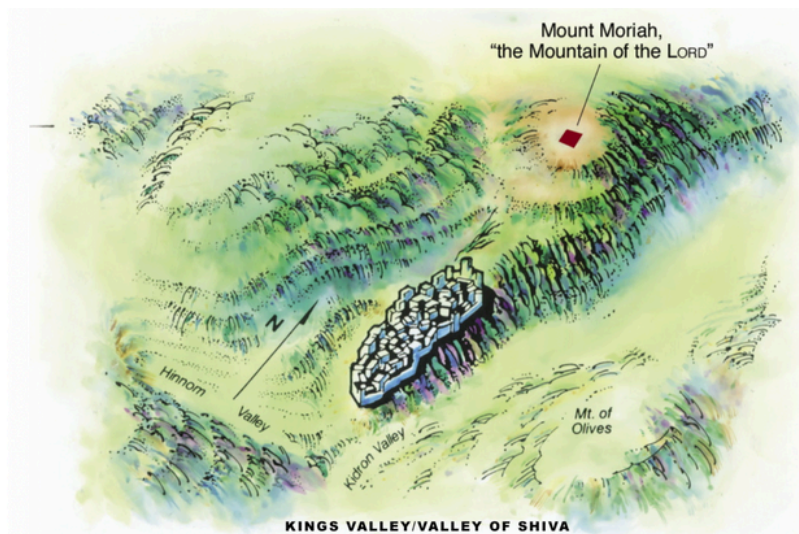
C. H. McKintosh said “it frequently happens that immediately after a victory, one has to encounter a fresh temptation”. Story: (PCS, service development, promoted etc.)

Back to our text, here is what I think the LORD wants us to see and learn about choices. Let me start by showing you a reoccurring word in the text beginning in **verse 11** – and this word is central to understanding Abram’s choices.

Ancient writers use words over and over in the text to draw our attention to main themes. Original recurring words are not as obvious to see in our modern translations but if we look at **verse 11-24 NASB**. We will see the word “possessions, possessor” appears seven times. Hold onto that.

So Abram comes back from defeating Kedorlaomer and he comes back with all the possessions that were taken from Sodom and Gomorrah and from Lot.

And we see then in **verse 17** that two kings meet Abram and all the possessions in the King’s Valley. It is believed by historians that the King’s Valley was the south end of the Kidron valley where the valley floor was level.



So picture this.. Abram + 318 fighting men, and who knows how many support people – ancient armies always had support people somewhere behind them for gear, food etc... and picture all the animals, livestock, food, loot.. all the possessions in this king’s valley.

And into that picture comes two Kings. We know the first King already - King Bera of Sodom “the son of evil” - whose city is going to get scorched. He comes riding into the valley on his Harley.

King Bera obviously survived the battle when he fled... but isn’t interesting that where there is abundance evil soon appears? Be watchful around abundance.

The second King that meets Abram in the valley of the Kings is King Melchizedek, yes the same Melchizedek mentioned in Hebrews seven.

We learn a lot about Melchizedek from **verse 18**.

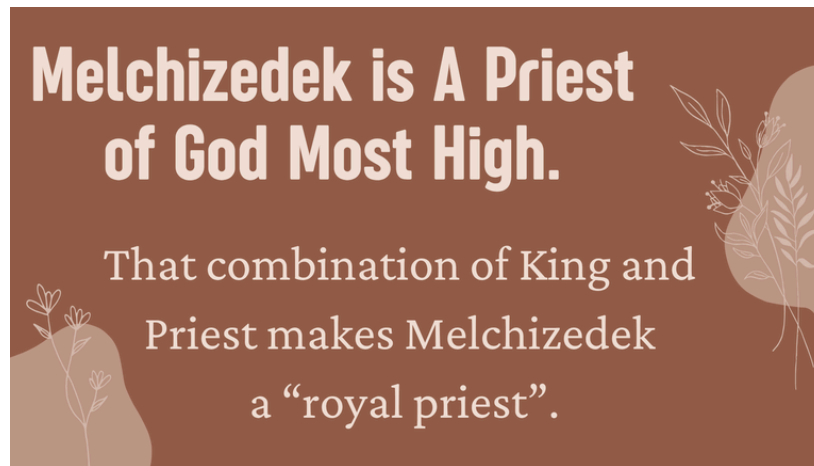
Melchizedek’s name means “King of Righteousness”. Melchizedek is also the King of “Salem” the local city to the valley of the kings. In Hebrew “Salem” is a close cousin of “Shalom” in Hebrew.. meaning “peace”. So Melchizedek is also the “King of Peace”.

Melchizedek

Melchizedek means “King of Righteousness”.
Melchizedek is also the King of “Salem”.

Salem is Jerusalem and it is close to the Valley of Kings. In Hebrew “Salem” is a close cousin of “Shalom”... meaning “peace”. So Melchizedek is also the “King of Peace”.

The end of **verse 18** tells us this King of righteousness and King of peace was also a priest of God Most High. That combination of King and Priest makes Melchizedek a “royal priest”.



And the King of Righteousness, who is the King of Peace, who is a royal priest of the Most High God, brings out bread and wine. (Gives me chills) **Luke 22:17a, 19a**. According to John Sailhamer bread and wine offered in a royal encounter was a symbol of peace.

Now remember there are two kings that meet Abram in the Valley of the Kings – and note the contrast here of these two kings. Melchizedek – the King of Righteousness, the King of Peace, the royal priest of God Most High –and the 2nd king is King Bera – the Son of evil – the King of a city named Sodom that is going to get scorched! These two kings represent two voices competing for Abram’s choice – this is the test, the temptation.

And look closely at each. King & Priest Melchizedek comes in peace and pronounces a blessing on Abram – **verse 19-20 NASB** Note the word “possessor”.

In essence Melchizedek says to Abram “you are blessed because you belong to God Most High who is the possessor of all of heaven and earth (**Genesis 1:1** language) – not just this little pile of battle loot. And then in **verse 20** Melchizedek gives praise for the victory where praise is due...He reminds Abram that The LORD won the battle – not Abram – The battle belongs to the LORD!

The end of **verse 20** tells us that Abram immediately responded to Melchizedek... by giving Melchizedek a tenth of all the battle possessions. In essence Abram submits to Melchizedek, he accepts the priestly blessing, and in turn gives Mech a tenth.

Now at this point what possessions does Abram have left? What was Lot’s would have gone back to Lot. Abram then gave a tenth to Melchizedek and we know from the text that some of the loot had already been eaten by the warriors. So now there are two sets of eyes looking at this massive amount of battle loot – Abram’s and King Bera’s.

And King Bera in **verse 21** says to Abram. Remember this is Bera “son of evil”... so the appropriate questions here for you and I to ask about Bera’s offer are: “what is the hustle? What is the angle? What is the trap Bera has set to gain power over Abram? Pause and think this through. In war code, the victor gets the spoils of war – the battle loot. So all this battle loot is rightfully Abram’s according to the law that all the kings of world, kings of empire live by. Imagine the temptation to say “it is mine”.

But, If Abram accepts Bera’s offer and keeps the loot and sends back just the people to with King Bera, then two bad things happen. First Abram, in an honor culture, would be in some way is indebted to King Bera – in essence becoming subject to Bera. That’s not a whole lot different than being subject to Kedorlaomer. That’s pretty awful.. However there is a more sinister evil lurking here, reminiscent of Eve and the serpent.

If Abram keeps the possessions for himself Abram becomes subject to not just King Bera, but subject to the world.

By keeping the possessions he would have acquired the possessions by taking the possession from worldly kings – in essence once again it would not have been the LORD taking care of Abram but the kings of the world taking care of Abram. Didn't taking from the kings of the world, Pharaoh, already go bad for him in Egypt? Didn't taking from kings of the world have damaging consequences on his marriage and family and his descendants and future nation?

In **Proverbs 9:3, 14** Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly are both calling out from the heights overlooking the city. Picture this...two voices, two competing voices, two choices. The first voice, Lady Wisdom, leads to life **Proverbs 8:35**. The second voice, Lady Folly leads to death **Proverbs 9:18**. Two voices, two choices for Abram – the first is Bera's voice and the entrapment of the world.. the second voice is God's voice and the blessing of life? What voice does Abram listen to.. what does Abram choose to do with the rest of the bounty that is according to the world, rightfully his? **Genesis 14:22-24**



Abram gives it all away – all of it! Abram chooses this time to trust the LORD "possessor of heaven and earth" whom Abram belongs to, to meet all his needs, and not to trust the world.

John Sailhamer says, "Abram's reward would not come from the kings of this world, but from the LORD "possessor of heaven and earth". Any possessions or blessings that Abram would have would come from the LORD – and that my friends is what this chapter illuminates for us readers even 4000 years later.

Thoughts for meditation and application:

1. Choices have consequences. We have two competing voices.. Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly Lady. Wisdom is listening to God's voice and it leads to life and blessing. Folly is the voice of the world and it leads to entrapment and death. Chose carefully. What do you chose?
2. If you are fleeing problems and don't flee to the LORD you may end up stuck in a tar pit.
3. Be mindful and prayerful – that with success there is always temptation and where there is abundance, evil quickly shows up.
4. The spoils of victory cannot sustain a person or a nation, loot is temporary. Only God can sustain you.
5. Melchizedek is linked to Jesus in **Hebrews 7**. Read it.

SUPPLEMENTAL

NOTES:

1. **Ancient Babylonia:** The Sumerians, Akkadians, Chaldeans and Babylonians all had empires in this region at different time periods.

2. **Are these Hebrew names or other languages?**

Some of the names that appear in Ch 14 appear to be in Akkadian, the language of Babylonia of the time, and some of the names appear to be Hebrew names. For example in **Genesis 14:1** King "Arioch of Ellasar" – in Akkadian perhaps means "servant of the Moon God", while in Hebrew the name Arioch is associated with the Hebrew word Aryeh – for "lion-like". If it is a Hebrew word than it indicates that the Hebrew writers may have sometimes given the kings of foreign countries Hebrew names.

3. **Thirteen. Verse 3** tells us that in the 13th year, the kings rebelled. Interesting the number thirteen in Hebrew is often associated with fighting order or disrupting order.

4. **Races of giants in the time of Abram.** **Genesis 6:4** says.. and for sometime after... referring to giants living in the land after the flood.

5. This miraculous battle that God won through Abram and 318 warriors is a clear foreshadowing of the Gideon and his 300 men and their miraculous win.

6. **Kings valley / Valley of Shaveh** "level" being the meaning of "Shaveh".

7. "Salem" was Jerusalem which later became the city of "Jebus" when the Jebusites conquered it, which later then became "Jerusalem" (Yerushalayim) at the time of King David.

8. **El.** "God Most High" is El-Elyon. "El" is also the Canaanite chief sky god.