

14 And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar [remember Shinar is the region in and around Babylon], Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations, ² 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). [Five kings were defeated by three kings. This was about 14 years before what we're about to read and explains the conquered cities paying tribute of some kind.]³ All these joined together in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). ⁴ Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled [refused to pay tribute]. ⁵ In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim, ⁶ and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as El Paran, which is by the wilderness. ⁷ 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. [It was a big regional war going on. On the way to go after the five rebellious kings, they were conquering others along the way.]

⁸ 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 ⁹ against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five. ¹⁰ Now the Valley of Siddim was full of asphalt pits; [This was like oil or asphalt tar on the surface of the land—the pits are still there today.] and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; some fell there, and the remainder fled to the mountains. ¹¹ Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. ¹² They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. [Lot now lives there. Last week he had just moved his tent to the front of Sodom. This is how sin creeps. Chedolaomer attacked and took Lot with all of his stuff.]

¹³ Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew [This is the first time that the word "Hebrew" appears in the Bible.], for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they were allies with Abram. ¹⁴ Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house [Abram was so wealthy that he had his own private army.], and went in pursuit as far as Dan. [Dan is named even though it wasn't yet created. This was written way after the event that we're reading. Like mentioning Clear Lake explaining movement of early Texas

troops.] ¹⁵ He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is ^{to} north of Damascus. ¹⁶ 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. **[Abram beat Chedorlaomer, and he got everything back and rescued Lot.]**

¹⁷ 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.

Abram and Melchizedek [This is his title; it is not his name. Melchizedek means "King of Righteousness" מֶלֶכִּי-צְדָקָה.]

¹⁸ Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. **[What in the world does this mean?]**¹ (Genesis 14:1-18, NKJV with author's notes in brackets).

This was before any sort of priesthood had been enacted. This was before the Torah. This was before the priesthood of Aaron. What can this mean? I think this man was ordained by God to be a priest exactly as is described. Archeological evidence shows there was an ancient Temple at this time right where the Temple ending up being located centuries later. We are given hints about Melchizedek in different pieces of scripture. In the Psalms, we learn that this priest is of the order from which Messiah will come.

*The LORD said to my Lord,
"Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."
² The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion.
Rule in the midst of Your enemies!
⁴ The LORD has sworn
And will not relent,
"You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110:1,2,4, NKJV).*

David is prophesying that Messiah would come from a unique priestly order such as was Melchizedek. It WILL NOT BE PART of the Aaronic Priesthood. Jesus did not come from the house of Aaron, but in fact was in this unique priestly order. He was A PRIEST AND A

¹ El Elyon – The God of all Gods

KING called by God the Father. Jesus is our high Priest and King. We'll look at Melchizedek a bit closer in a minute.

¹⁹ And he blessed him and said:

"Blessed be Abram of God Most High, [El Elyon]

Possessor of heaven and earth;

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,

Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."

And he gave him a tithe of all. (Genesis 14:19-20, NKJV with author's notes in brackets).

It looks to me like Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of ALL that Abram owned, not just what he had acquired along the way.

²¹ Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself." [King of Sodom said give me my people back and you take the stuff.]

²² 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[Abram makes it clear that he is talking about Yahweh.], ²³ 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'— ²⁴ 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." (Genesis 14:1-18, NKJV with author's notes in brackets).

I want to take a minute to discuss what is going on here with the booty that had been taken, but also a bit about the identity of Melchizedek. Some have wondered whether Melchizedek is actually a christophany (a pre-birth appearance of Jesus). I would like to address that and then discuss Abram's reluctance to receive any part of the booty from the King of Sodom.

Was Melchizedek Jesus?

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," ³ without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. (Hebrews 7:1-3, NKJV).

Melchizedek is not this person's name. It is a title meaning "King of Righteousness." He was also "King of Salem," meaning "King of Peace." He was a "Priest of the Most High God" (see Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6-11, 6:20-7:28). It is patently clear that Jesus is also a Priest and a King. All of this allusion makes one wonder whether Melchizedek is in fact Jesus. Melchizedek is even more mysterious when he is referenced in the passage above as being *"without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever."* It leaves us wondering whether this was actual or figurative. Abraham presented Melchizedek a tithe indicating that Melchizedek was of a higher spiritual rank than Abraham himself.

In the verse from Psalm 110 cited above, both Messiah and Melchizedek are a type of Priestly King. Hebrews 6:20 says that "[Jesus] has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." This leaves further conjecture that Melchizedek and Jesus might be the same person. This can be surmised by understanding that Jesus is a type of priest that is forever different than the Aaronic priests that came later. If the description in the Book of Hebrews is literal, then Melchizedek could indeed be a Christophany. If the description is figurative, then the mysterious details of having no genealogy etc, just give support to the mysterious nature of this character that Abraham meets after his victory over the kings who kidnapped Lot.

For many years I have taught that Melchizedek is most likely a Christophany, meaning an appearance of Christ Himself. I'm not so sure now, and it really doesn't matter. I suppose I have moved in my thinking on this based on the words in Greek of the passage just cited. The phrase **"ἀφωμοιωμένος (aphōmoiōmenos)"** "having been made like" doesn't say he was in fact the son of God. Melchizedek is at the very least a person who establishes the concept of an order of priests higher than those that will come later in the Mosaic Covenant. He is mysterious. He is a king. He is King of Jerusalem. He is King of Peace. He is "like" the son of God, but He probably wasn't the son of God. Adding to the mystery is his presentation of bread and wine to Abraham, which is a direct parallel of Jesus' Last Supper with His disciples. I like how the authors of gotquestions.org summarize the quandary.

Are Melchizedek and Jesus the same person? A case can be made either way. At the very least, Melchizedek is a type of Christ, prefiguring the Lord's ministry. But it is also possible that Abraham, after his weary battle, met and gave honor to the Lord Jesus Himself.²

² <https://www.gotquestions.org/Melchizedek.html>

What's Important About Abram's Refusal of the Booty from the Raid?

Abram says that he wants nothing of the booty. He basically tells the King of Sodom to give it to the others in the raiding party. He tells the King of Sodom that he doesn't want ANYTHING to be given to him lest someone make a claim that THEY made Abraham rich and take the glory from God. He did not want any kind of connection between himself and the king of Sodom. Abram didn't want to be tied up or unequally yoked with the wicked. He made it clear that he was depending on God who would fulfill His promise to "make him to be a great nation." There are some important lessons in here for us as a church. I recently heard a pastor teach that, "where God guides, God provides." I agree with this. When God calls us, He takes care of the calling in every way. He makes a way, and He makes full provision for us to walk in our calling.

We don't have to work this out and try to make provision for ourselves. We just need to be obedient. If God calls you (or us) into an area of ministry, He will work it out. After Sandy and I ended our Home Fellowship (I believe in 2009), we went back to First Baptist Navasota, where Pastor Clyde Larabee recognized that God had called me as a pastor. The first Sunday we went back, he recognized me as "Pastor Faber" from the pulpit. Frankly, I was uncomfortable because no one in the congregation knew me as a "pastor." I was just a former member who had left a few years before that. Clyde recognized God's call on my life. He put us in charge of Wednesday night teachings in Room 205, and I began to teach. In time, I felt God's call to enroll in Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and I earned my Masters's Degree in Theological Studies. Approximately seven months after graduation, I was asked to come speak at the Grove, and we were called to pastor this church. At that time, there were seven members left. God put a verse in Sandy's heart encouraging us to "strengthen what remains" (Revelation 3:2), and we set about to do just that. We committed to be obedient and to watch God work and to watch God provide.

Like Abraham, we purposed in our hearts not to do ANYTHING that might take the glory from God for what He would do in this place. It is not wrong to count attendees (we need that data to know how to better prepare for the future), but personally neither of us has ever counted how many come. We know that it might cause us to put too much attention on growth in numbers instead of spiritual growth in all who attend. I have never preached on tithing or even really giving. I have never tried to guilt people into giving. All that has come into the storehouse of this church has been because of the attitude that God has put into the hearts of those who attend and those who give not grudgingly or of necessity but as cheerful givers. During Covid, we didn't even take up an offering for a year or so. We just stuck a box on the back row of the pew and trusted God to make provision for His ministry in this place. And He did just that.

Little by little, God has brought good leadership, sound finances, and a strong faith community to this place. From the beginning, He showed us that "community" was going to be PARAMOUNT in making this church body different from so many others. Once got the plumbing and basic repairs done, as a church we started giving to missions. We support foreign missions through the SBC, Texas missions through the Texas Baptists, and local missions through the local outreach that Pastor Larry and others do. God is doing this. We are not doing this. We are just being obedient participants, and He is making provisions as we go forward.

When Abram turned down the King of Sodom's gifts, he could brag on God for having done it all and for having made Abram rich. Abram was now looking to God for total provision. As a church body, when we move out of the way and let God have His way, it is just absolutely amazing to watch what He does. We become excited participants who have the privilege of working where God is working. To our Priest and King, King Jesus, we give all glory, praise, and honor.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.