**August 12, 2020 | A Study on Chapter 14 of the Book of Genesis**

**Abram Rescues Lot**

“The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” This is an ancient expression that originated in India in the 3rd century BC. A similar thought, “Politics makes strange bedfellows” is attributed to Charles Dudley Warner, a novelist who was a contemporary of Samuel Clemens. The idea that people who have a common foe should join forces often leads to temporary alliances that fall apart at the earliest convenience of one or both parties. The Soviet Union was our ally during World War II but our bitter enemy during the Cold War. The Chinese Nationalists teamed with the Chinese Communists in their war against Japan but after the war the Nationalists were banned to Taiwan and the Communists refuse to acknowledge their sovereignty to this day. The US backed the Hussein regime in Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war but deposed him in 2003. Alliances based on short term goals seem doomed to fail, particularly when ideologies do not comport. Often one country’s principles have to be sacrificed to do business with another nation with which it has little in common. Genesis chapter 14 describes the first recorded war in the human history which arose out of a conflict over money (no surprise there).

The chapter begins by naming the two factions of kings who would go to war. The kings of Shinar (Chaldea), Ellasar and Elam (Persia) joined by Tidal who was king of nomadic tribes in Mesopotamia had conflicts among themselves previously but were united in the fight against the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Bela. This could have been out of fear of retribution by Kedorlaomer or a desire to share in the bounty of the 5 cities they would attack. The 5 plains cities shared a common problem; they were being oppressed by Kedorlaomer who was collecting extortion money from them. Kedorlaomer and his allies began their conquest by invading city states which neighbored Sodom, enriching themselves while spreading fear in the region. The kings of Sodom, Gomorrah and the other 3 cities were defeated at the Valley of Sidim and their towns were plundered.

Abram was not involved in this war as he had nothing in common with either side. The northern kings were interested in building their wealth unlike Abram who was satisfied with what he had. The 5 plains cities were full of wickedness which would have been an affront to a righteous man like Abram. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah is very familiar but God also destroyed the cities of Adham and Zeboiim (see Deut. 29:23). Sometimes neutrality is seen as weakness but often neutral countries need to project strength to remain neutral. Switzerland remained neutral during World War II not because they were weak but because Germany knew Switzerland had a formidable military and avoided conflict with them. Abram’s neutral position in this war changed when he received news that Lot and his family were taken captive. His bellicose reaction might seem out of character since some might describe him as a timid man but it is clear that he was well prepared to defend his family having 318 trained men in his company. Abram’s response was swift, his victory was decisive and he recovered the people who were captured and their possessions.

When Abram returned from battle, he was met by 2 kings and his responses to them were as different as night and day. Melchizedek who was the king of Salem (an early name for Jerusalem) met him with bread and wine and blessed him in the name of God Most High. Melchizedek is a somewhat elusive character in the Bible. He is introduced here in Genesis then is not mentioned again by name until chapter 7 of Hebrews. Abram gives Melchizedek one tenth of what he had recovered indicating that he recognizes some authority in the king of Salem. The notes in my MIV Bible give the following possible identities of Melchizedek:

He was a king in the region and Abram was showing him respect

The name may represent the title reserved for all kings of Salem, similar to Pharaoh

Melchizedek was a type of Christ

Melchizedek was a Christophany (an appearance of a pre-incarnate Christ

Reading the description of Melchizedek in Hebrews leads me to believe that Melchizedek was Christ in a pre-incarnate appearance. Verse 3 says that he was without father or mother, without beginning of days or end of life. Jesus is the only one who fits that description and it is possible that Abram recognized him and honored him with a tithe. When the king of Sodom offered Abram the plunder he had recovered, Abram in essence snubbed him with his refusal, again showing little regard for wealth. He had a right to keep all he recovered but instead gave God 10% and gave away the other 90%. His alliance with the 5 kings of the plains was very brief and only due to his desire to rescue Lot. I am reminded of the conversation Jesus had with John regarding a man who was driving out demons in his name. Jesus said that whoever is not against us is for us (Mark 9:38-41). It takes discernment to know who is truly for you and Abram recognized that the king of Gomorrah represented a wickedness that he wanted no part of. Abram made a clear choice reminding me of a portion of a verse often quoted by Steve: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15).