

Series: God & Abraham #1170

Title: Genesis 14.2, 5-7

Who Are The Kings & The Conquered?

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. As we bring to a conclusion yet another week (don't you feel we are speeding through these weeks – wow!), at the end of this week let's pick up where left off last time and, in Genesis 14, in the war of the kings let's again ask our *who* question. Who are these kings?

I hope you were with us yesterday as we talked about the four kings from the north, and emphasized two of them in particular because they came from Babylon (written as Shinar in this chapter) and Persia (known as Elam in this chapter). Babylon and Persia are two significant empires thriving at the time of the events of the Hebrew Bible (what we call the Old Testament). Amraphel is king of Shinar. Shinar is Babylon. And Chedorlaomer is king of Elam. Elam is, later, Persia.

As a follow-up, and before we get into the meat of today's episode of God Is, let me just add three things. First, there are those who think that Amraphel was Hammurabi. Hammurabi was the great king of Babylon that we know so much about today. But it is now believed Amraphel was not Hammurabi. Hammurabi does not come along until later. Second, those of you listening who know ancient history will have a question: how could the king of what was Babylon and the king of what became Persia have had this alliance when they were otherwise rivals? Actually they were *bitter* rivals.

But, it seems to me, the answer to this question is simple. All throughout history, up until the present, there are two countries that are bitter enemies, but under certain circumstances, the two will work together if it means that by joining forces they take action that helps them both. For example, they could have a common enemy they want to take out. Hence, a short partnership to accomplish a specific goal. Once the goal is achieved, the rivalry resumes.

And the third thing I want to say, bridging yesterday to today, is that when we read about these kings making war that does not mean each king *personally* took off for the battlefield. It is likely the king's military were the ones responsible for planning and implementation. Just like today, Russia is the aggressor in the war with Ukraine. This does not mean Vladimir Putin himself takes to the battle. Rather, he is like the king at war, sitting back in the comforts of his palace in Moscow as the heads of the Russian military go off to do combat.

Dr. Aalders comments (quote), "We need not picture this as though...the kings personally led this expedition. They undoubtedly entrusted this to military leaders who were under their orders. Ancient accounts of military victories customarily were written as though the kings themselves were present on the field of battle leading their victorious armies (*Bible Student's Commentary: Genesis, Volume I*, 285)." That is a helpful insight from the good theologian in his commentary on Genesis. And we will hear from him again shortly.

OK. Let's return now to the Bible and continue to identify *who* these kings are (or were). And I will read Genesis 14, verse 2 which identifies the five kings of the south. It is the four kings of the north versus the five kings of the south and now let's meet them. Genesis 14, verse 2, "**...they (the kings of the north) made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).**"

These five kings are allied together. I think it is both fascinating and instructive to listen again to Charles Aalders as he writes about the names of these five kings. Quoting him again now, "We can establish that these names have a genuine Palestinian character...On the basis of the Arabic language, the name Bera king of Sodom can be interpreted as 'conqueror.' Birsha king of Gomorrah as 'large man.' Shinab king of Admah as 'health' or 'beauty' or as 'Sin (the moon god) is father.' Shemeber king of Zeboiim as 'his name is mighty.' (*Bible Student's Commentary: Genesis, Volume I*, 283)." (End of the quotation on the meaning of these names.)

Conqueror, large man, health or beauty or the moon god is father, and his name is mighty, if you know anything about the pride of kings, this is not hard to believe! And notice that the king of Bela (Zoar) is not mentioned by name. Moses must have a reason for leaving his name off the list and I suspect this is why: he wants to show the so-called later intelligent skeptic that these names are not fantasy! If the names of these kings are all made up to fit a fictional tale that the Bible is spinning together, as the skeptic says, well then why not give the king of Bela a fantastical name as well? Friends, this is not make believe. These are not made-up names. Moses is writing non-fiction, not fiction.

Alright, are you with me? I am not boring you, am I? It is not a bad thing to ask, "What does this have to do with me? Why should I care about this?" You might have those questions about now, and for now I would simply say, you should care because this is the very Word of God and every sentence, every word, matters. God thinks so! Otherwise He would not have told us about these kings and this war. And since my purpose is to teach the Scripture, that is what I am doing. We seek understanding, and not always about what is easier to grasp, or more immediately applicable to our lives from the Bible. Often we need to systematically and carefully make our way through passages that are harder for our very modern eyes and minds to grasp, and that take time.

So, let's stick with our *who* question and drop down to another set of names.

These are not the names of kings, but the names of people groups the four kings of the north conquered on their way to the great battle. If you have your Bible with you, join me in verses 5-7 of this fourteenth chapter of Genesis. **"⁵ In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim and the Zuzim in Ham and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶ and the Horites in their Mount 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 conquered all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-tamar.**

Continuing with what is fascinating and instructive, let's learn what these names mean. And for this we turn to another friend, Henry M. Morris, and his ever insightful and easy-to-read book *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings*. About these people groups he writes (quote), "The Zuzim are probably the same as the Zamzummin in Deuteronomy 2.20, who are said to have been giants, 'a people great, and many, and tall.' The same description was applied to the Emim in Deuteronomy 2.10, whose name meant 'the terrible ones.' The Rephaim ('strong ones') and the Zamzummin ('powerful ones') were possibly tribes of the Anakim ('giants') [314]." (End quote.)

Ah, so the kings of the north have come up against tall people, giants, strong ones, terrible ones, and powerful ones *and* the kings of the north, led by Chedorlaomer *won!* Now that ought to tell us something about how fierce, battle ready, and powerful these four kings of the north and their militaries are. The five kings of the south better watch out.

Just before I leave you for the weekend, I want to point out a connection in the Bible between the Rephaim and Satanism, evil, and the occult. And this is because this word for Rephaim is very closely associated with the word that describes the spirits of wicked dead people in the Books of Job, Proverbs, and Isaiah. Let me give you a few more Scriptures to read in this regard.

Read Job 26, verse 5; Proverbs chapter 2, verse 18; Proverbs chapter 9, verse 18; and Proverbs chapter 21, and verse 16. And then you can go over to Isaiah and read chapter 14, verse 9 and chapter 26, verse 14. When you do you will read of the dead – those are the wicked dead, and a very similar word to Rephaim is the word used in those texts. Let me pronounce it. You say, "That sounds like Raph-eye-e." Exactly! That is my point. What we have here in Genesis 14 are evil people who, at this time, co-exist in the land of Canaan with Abram.

Those texts for weekend reading again are: Job 26, verse 5; Proverbs chapter 2, verse 18; chapter 9, verse 18; and chapter 21, and verse 16. And then Isaiah chapter 14, verse 9 and chapter 26, verse 14.

We are dealing with our *who* question in Genesis 14 and all of this is setting the stage for a war that effects Abram and his nephew Lot. I hope that you have been following along closely and learning and we will continue with the first war recorded in the Bible when you join us again on Monday because God Is! ---END---