

Commentary Highlights

Genesis 14:1-24

NAC	New American Commentary
PTW	Preaching the Word
BST	The Bible Speaks Today
GIG	Gleanings in Genesis
CAL	Genesis: Calvin's Commentary
SOG	The Story of God Bible Commentary
BKW	Genesis by Bruce K Waltke
KUR	Genesis by Abraham Kuruvilla
REC	Reformed Expository Commentary

****The views presented in these commentary excerpts may not reflect the general understanding of these passages as expressed by Faith Bible Church, but are presented to help us better understand the Scriptures and how various scholars have interpreted them****

Genesis 14:1-12

(NAC) – “The eastern alliance consisted of four kings, led by Kedorlamor, king of Elam, who had received tribute from the western kings for twelve years. “Elam,” known as the son of Shem, designates a region in ancient Persia (modern southwest Iran) whose capital was Susa. In the thirteenth year the western kings refused to pay their annual tribute.”

(SOG) – “On the one hand, we have four kings from the east. Amraphel is the king of Shinar, which is another name for Babylon. Kedorlaomer is the king of Elam, which is a known nation in southwestern Iran...Arioch is the king of Ellasar and Tidal the king of Goyim” of which we cannot identify their locations. “On the other side are five local kings. Bera and Bersha are kings of Sodom and Gomorrah...but we do not know exactly where these cities are located, though most think in the vicinity of the southern part of the Dead Sea. The other three kings are presumably smaller locations that were in the vicinity of Sodom and Gomorrah...After the initial conquests, the five kings introduced in the first paragraph of the chapter now take the field in the Valley of Siddim (the Dead Sea Valley) to confront the four kings of the east. The four decisively rout the five local kings, scattering their armies.”

(PTW) – “Sodom was part of a pentapolis (a group of five cities, each with a petty king) located at the southern end of the Dead Sea, which had been paying tribute for twelve years to a coalition of four kings from the east...The eastern coalition was international in scope. Chedorlaomer of Elam was from modern Iran, Amraphel of Shinar (= Babylon) was from modern Iraq, and the two other kings, Arioch and Tidal, represented the Hurrians and Hittites (peoples from areas within modern Turkey).”

(BKW) – “For the first time in the Bible, tribes and nations now war against each other in the intensification of sin and the confusion from Babel.”

(NAC) – “This report of Kedorlaomer’s victories was not appropriated by the author for solely antiquarian interests. The wilderness Israelites traverse the route from Kadesh to Moab once conquered by these eastern kings; the ancient peoples who fell to Kedorlaomer were later supplanted by Israel or Israel’s relatives. The Edomites displaced the Horites, and Lot’s children, the Moabites and Ammonites, supplanted the Emmites and the Zamzuzites, respectively. If Father Abraham could defeat the invincible Kedorlaomer, the Israelites could take courage facing enemies in their own day.”

(PTW) – “Tar and asphalt are native to the Dead Sea, which Josephus actually called the Asphalt Sea. Asphalt still oozes in heavy liquid form in the southern part of the sea, where the five towns once lay.”

(BKW) – Referencing those who were trapped in the tar pits fleeing from their defeat in battle, Bruce Waltke says, “The forces of nature under the invisible hand of providence also conspire against the wicked men of Sodom to bring them down in defeat.”

(NAC) – “The victors were satisfied with confiscating the “goods” and “food” of the cities, leaving the kings to their bitumen jails, but Lot and his dependents are taken captive.”

(NAC) – “Irony occurs at many points in the passage, and here the taking of Lot proves to be Kedorlaomer’s undoing. If he had been satisfied with the goods, resisting the greed of dealing in human flesh, he may well have left unhindered. But as the account emphasizes, Lot was “Abram’s nephew”, which precipitated the report of Lot’s capture coming to Abram. As in chap. 13, which portrays the blessing Lot enjoyed in accord with the promises made to Abram, Kedorlaomer’s mistreatment of Lot, which was tantamount to opposing Abram, results in his destruction.”

Genesis 14:13-16

(PTW) – After Lot was taken and Abram hears about it, Kent Hughes reports that “the veil is lifted for a moment, and we see Abram in his true colors, acting as the king of the land that is his by right and that will be inherited by his offspring...Abram could easily have elected to do nothing. Lot had made his choice...But Abram chose to take action.”

(NAC) – “This is the first place in the Old Testament where “Hebrew” occurs.”

(NAC) – “Mamre has been identified as the modern Ramat el-Khalil, two miles north of Hebron. Mamre only appears in Genesis; it was a place where Abram encamped and located just west of the patriarchs’ burial site, the cave of Machpelah.”

(NAC) – “Abram’s leading as many as 318 men, all born to his own household, shows the patriarch’s substantial wealth and power.”

(BKW) – Waltke suggests that 318 men was a sizeable army at this time, which reflects Abram’s power and reputation at this time.

(SOG) – “Abram mobilized his allies and the 318 and they pursued the kings up to the city of Dan. The mention of Dan has long been recognized as postmosaica since this city is not given this name until the period of Judges, and it gets its name from Abram’s not-yet-born great grandson.”

(NAC) – Dan (Tel Dan) is located in the far north at the base of Mount Hermon. Its settlement period was virtually continuous from as early as 5000 B.C. down to the Christian era. The former name of Dan was “Laish,” which is mentioned in eighteenth century texts from Egypt and Mari; the Danites re-named the site after they dispossessed it.”

(PTW) – Dan is approximately 120 miles north of Mamre.

(PTW) – Kent Hughes suggests that the reason why Moses includes this story in the Genesis narrative is so that we might see and marvel at the incredible victory. Earlier in the chapter, Moses shows us the power of these four kings, yet under the hand of God Abram with only 318 armed men is able to bring these super powers to their knees.

(SOG) – “God provided the victory for Abram as he will throughout the history of Israel under the leadership of Moses, Joshua, David, and others.”

Genesis 14:17-24

(PTW) – “The setting was the Valley of Shaveh, the King’s Valley, a brief distance south of Jerusalem. There two kings greeted Abram and his warriors, the king of Sodom and the king of Salem. Both were Canaanite kings. The kings are a study in contrast. The king of Sodom viewed Abram’s victory as a human feat, but the king of Salem saw it as divine.”

(NAC) – “Now humiliated he (King of Sodo) stands before the victor Abram in the “Valley of Shaveh.” “Shaveh,” meaning “plain,” is explained in the text as the “King’s Valley” (2 Sam 18:18), perhaps the small plain where the Kidron, Hinnom, and Tyropoeon valleys come together, east of Jerusalem. This proximity to Jerusalem explains the sudden appearance of Melchizedek, the king of Salem (= Jerusalem).”

(NAC) – “Melchizedek, means “King of Righteousness” (Heb 7:2); the language “king of Salem,” *melek salem*, means literally “king of peace.”

(NAC) – ““Salem” is widely recognized as an ancient name for Jerusalem in Jewish tradition; “Salem” appears in parallel with “Zion,” referring to the temple at Jerusalem.”

(NAC) – “This incident, however, is the only priestly blessing in Genesis. Later, the priests were the chief agents of blessing in Israel; however, often a national leader or family member blessed others by invoking the Lord. Invocations typically assumed that only the

Lord could ultimately bestow blessing; a benedictory prayer petitioned God for prosperity and well being.”

(NAC) – In reference to the title for God “possessor of heaven and earth, “the verb *qana* usually means “acquire, get” in the sense of obtaining something or someone; metaphorically, it may be used of redeeming Israel...Melchizedek [in this passage] is claiming for Abram’s God the exalted place of Lord of the universe.”

(NAC) – We can know that Melchizedek held a “superior position” over Abram “by virtue of his blessing the patriarch (Abram) and by Abram’s deference toward him in presenting a tithe to the priest-king”

(PTW) – “Abram validated Melchizedek’s priesthood by his tithe, as was customary for priestly services.”

(SOG) – “Abram clearly recognizes Melchizedek as one who shares his faith in the same God...he also shows him deference when he receives a blessing from him (a superior blesses and an inferior receives the blessing), and he responds by giving him a tithe (a tenth) of the plunder.”

(SOG) – “Abram makes it quite clear that he wants absolutely nothing to do with Sodom and its king...By refusing to accept the plunder to enrich himself, he makes it clear that he is unwilling to be in a formal relationship with the king of Sodom. He will accept absolutely nothing. He will allow his allies to benefit from the victory, but he will not be beholden to the king of Sodom...It is not that Abram is loath to accept gifts from foreign kings. The reason must be that Sodom’s exceptional evil keeps him from any involvement that might show him dependent on that city.”

(KUR) – “Melchizedek’s role as a foil for the king of Sodom perhaps explains the abruptness of the entry of the former into the story: one is associated with deity and the other is the regent of a wicked and sinful nations; one brings out bread and wine in a gesture of peace, the other goes out to make war; one is generous, the other is grudging—he comes empty handed and has no words of gratitude for his deliverance; one brings food for the patriarch, the other asks for spoils from him...In fact, the king of Sodom can only utter six words (in Hebrew), rather rudely: “Give to-me people; but-goods take for-yourself.” Brusque and audacious, he designs to take before he offers, in a command rather than a request, rather unusual for one who had been on the losing side of a battle.”

(BKW) – “What is wrong with the king of Sodom’s proposal is his audacity and attitude. The victor, not a defeated king, has the right to stipulate the disposition of the spoils of war. Moreover, the king’s attitude is deceitful and begrudging. He does not greet Abraham with joy and gladness.”

(PTW) – “Melchizedek brought a banquet. Melchizedek blessed Abram, but Sodom offered a crude, rude deal that can be summarized in six words: “Give me people; take property yourself.” As rescuer, Abram was entitled to all. Sodom’s deal was an ungracious, self-serving demand.”

(KUR) – Melchizedek’s generosity is remarkable—rather than bread and water, the staple diet, he provides bread and wine, royal fare.”

(BKW) – Waltke suggest that the phrase “bread and wine” is a merism referring to a “full dinner, a royal banquet.”

(NAC) – “The writer to the Hebrews may well have assumed that his readers believed Melchizedek was the first priest and hence had no genealogical requirements. Psalm 110:4 was addressed by God to David’s “Lord” who was the Christ; hence, like that of Melchizedek, Jesus was appointed the head of a new order, having no predecessors, since he like Melchizedek did not come from Levi’s succession. Melchizedek’s priesthood antedated that of Levi, and Jesus came from Judah, which possessed no priestly succession. The writer to the Hebrews emphasized the superiority of the priestly order of Jesus to Levi by observing the greater priesthood of Melchizedek in contrast to Levi...Melchizedek is a copy of the heavenly priesthood of Jesus, “like the Son of God,” not Jesus a type of Melchizedek.”

(KUR) – “Melchizedek is primarily an example of a non-Jew who recognizes God’s hand at work in Israel: like Abimelech (21:22), Rahab (Josh 2:11), Ruth (1:16), or Naaman (2 Kgs 5:15). Similarly, he may be seen as a forerunner of the Magi (Matt 2:1-12), centurions (Matt 8:5-13; Mark 15:39; Acts 10), or the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:26-30), let alone the multitude of Gentile converts mentioned in Acts. They are those who have discovered that in Abram all the families of the earth find blessing” (Originally taken from Gordon Wenham’s commentary on Genesis 1-15)

(NAC) – “Abram’s oath echoes the name of God used in Melchizedek’s blessing the divine name Yahweh, identifying Melchizedek’s God as his own.”

(KUR) – “Abram is clear about how he will possess the land—it will be as a divine gift given to an outsider.”

On Melchizedek in the Bible:

(PTW) – “This is the only historical mention of Melchizedek in the Old Testament...The truth is that Melchizedek was the godly, residing Canaanite priest-king of Jerusalem. Whereas Abram was ad descendant of the blessed Shem, Melchizedek was a descendant of the cursed Canaan. Nevertheless, Melchizedek, like Abram, had come to believe in the one true God. Abram had found him to be a true spiritual brother and therefore accepted his provision and blessings—and then gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything...Abram bowed

before the one who was holding the place for the future Davidic dynasty and its ultimate son.”

(PTW) – “Melchizedek’s titles foreshadowed the character of Christ...Significantly, Melchizedek was a priest-king, something that, by law, no Levitical priest could ever be. But Jesus became the ultimate priest-king, fulfilling to the letter what was promised through Zechariah regarding the Messiah...Melchizedek foreshadowed the character of Christ—his priesthood, his kingship, his righteousness, and his peace.”

(PTW) – “The writer of Hebrews also sees a foreshadowing of Christ’s qualifications, because he writes that Melchizedek was “without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever.” Some have inferred from these words that Melchizedek must have been an angel who took on human form for Abram, or even a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ himself. But such interpretations are unnecessary because the writer is simply using a rabbinical method of interpretation from silence. His point is that the Genesis account does not mention Melchizedek’s parents or genealogy or when he was born or died, thereby giving a type of what would be fleshed out in the qualifications of Christ...Jesus’ priesthood, just like Melchizedek’s, was based solely on the call of God, not on heredity...Secondly, all Levitical priests served limited terms of office—no more than thirty years. But with Melchizedek, there was no set beginning or end of his life...Whereas the earthly high priest could only enter the Holy of Holies once a year and with great trepidation, Jesus lived in the heavenly Holy of Holies. There he perpetually prays for us.

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