

98-10-11b

We're back now from our break and ready to resume in Genesis chapter 14. The setting for the conflict that we see here, as I mentioned, we're going to see three military campaigns, three battles in this chapter. We're also going to see three meetings that Abram has subsequent to that.

The setting for this is it comes hard on the heels of the separation of Abram and Lot. And we saw in that connection that in the promise that God makes to Abram, there is emphasized in that the idea of cursing turned to blessing. Things that look like they're trending toward death or toward cursing, toward no future and no hope.

God can take those things and turn them to blessing. And this story that we're about to see of capture and deliverance falls in that category. We're going to bring some more principles to our study of the doctrine of separation, of how you separate under what circumstances and what the nature of the treatment is of people that you have allowed to leave as the way Abram has allowed Lot to leave.

But the idea of cursing turned to blessing, or something that looks like it is going to be bad turning out to be good because God is in it, is of course at every level from the broad outline of what the Bible communicates all the way down to the individual stories within it. At every level you see God taking human sin, human error, human failing, and converting that from a disaster to a blessing, working it together for good according to the counsel of His own will. And this goes all the way back.

We mentioned last week that you have Adam and Eve in the garden. The only thing when God has created everything perfect, six days of creation and on the sixth day He creates Adam, and Adam is in the garden, everything is perfect. God has looked at all of it and seen that it is good.

But then, before there's any sin or before there's any other problem, the serpent hasn't yet appeared, God says, not good. What is it that He sees and He pronounces not good? Not good that the man should be alone. And He takes the rib and He creates Eve.

He creates a help suitable for Him, a help meet. And Eve then fills that not good gap and completes the life of the man. At the same time, she is the avenue of attack through which Satan is going to instigate the fall and the sin in the garden.

He deceives Eve and she and Adam together fall and fail. So you have the wife as the avenue of attack. We reviewed that idea when we looked at the story of Noah and his cursing of Canaan.

Very strange that you have eight people after the flood, Noah and his wife, Shem, Ham, and Japheth and their wives. And when Noah plants the vineyard and drinks from the

fruit of the vine and becomes drunk, it says he is uncovered in his tent and his son Ham saw the nakedness of his father. We reviewed that phrase and saw that in the law of Moses, it is a euphemism for incest.

It is a euphemism for having sexual relations and it specifically says that it is an abomination for a man to have relations with his mother because he has uncovered his father's nakedness. And it is a specific euphemism for incest. So it is our conclusion that this is probably what happened.

This explains why when Noah becomes aware of what has been done to him, he doesn't say cursed be Ham, he says cursed be Canaan. Canaan is the fourth son of Ham. Why Canaan and not the first three? Probably because Canaan is the product of this relationship.

And of course, Canaan is the father of the Canaanites, who we have just seen mentioned twice now in the last many verses as dwelling in the land. The Canaanite, in fact your Bible may say Canaanites and Perizzites here, but this is singular in verse 7 of chapter 13. The Canaanite and the Perizzite then dwelt in the land.

So there is a connection here. We are going to see that wives play a part in these stories. Sarah is the issue back in chapter 12 when Abram goes down to Egypt and he lies and tries to preserve his life.

He is put into fear and the temptation and the thing that trips Abram up is an issue with his wife. It is all about Sarai and his fear that the Egyptians will kill him for her. In reviewing this and thinking about it, it caused me to go back and take a look at something that I will just mention very quickly as a possibility.

I by no means would stake my life on this or die for it, but something that has always puzzled me, and this I will clearly label as a digression, although it is another illustration of what we are talking about. Cursing turned to blessing. You remember back when we studied the lines after the death of Abel, Cain is banished and he goes to live in the land of Nod and Adam and Eve have another son named Seth and you have the two parallel lines.

We drew those up on the board and we saw the parallelism of the two different lines, the descendants of Cain and the descendants of Seth. Several of them even had the same names and what their names meant and how it indicated the difference in thinking, just like we have seen the difference in thinking between Abram and Lot. When you get down to the end of the tracing of the line of Cain in Genesis chapter 4, you might turn back there and you remember that it culminates with a man named Lamech.

Lamech is the father of three sons, Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain, and he also has a daughter. There is another Lamech who is parallel to him in the line of Seth and he is the

father of Noah. We saw the fascinating interconnection of these two lines.

You get down this many generations and here is Lamech and Lamech. You have Lamech, the father of Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain, and you have the other Lamech, descended from Seth, who is the father of Noah and names Noah and gives the reason why he is naming that. Perhaps he will be the one to give us rest from the curse on the ground.

If you look at Genesis chapter 4 and get down to verse 19, it talks about Lamech and his life is expanded on in the same way that Lamech, the son of Noah, is expanded on. We have more detail than just here was his name, here is who he begot, here is how long he lived, and then he died. For some reason, the story of Lamech now is going to take up a number of verses.

Lamech, the descendant of Cain, took for himself two wives. He was the man of twos. Remember he had two wives and he killed two men and he said if Cain is cursed seven times, I'll be cursed 70 times seven.

The name of one wife was Ada, the name of the other was Zillah. Ada bore Jabal, he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother's name was Jubal, he was the father of all those who play the harp and the flute.

And as for Zillah, the second wife, she also bore a son, Tubal-Cain. He is an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah.

Then Lamech says to his wives and he sings this little song. Ada and Zillah, hear my voice. Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech.

For I have killed a man for wounding me and a young man for hurting me. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, then Lamech 77 fold. And this has been kind of puzzling me and I've just now worked out what satisfies me as a possible explanation.

Why you know that Cain went to the east. We talked about that last week when Lot journeys east. Cain went east and dwelt in the land of Nod.

He's far away. His line and his exploits are going to be read about in the newspapers by the line of Seth. Because they're not in the same area anymore.

So you might get a list of descendants. Somebody might be traveling in a caravan or something. Oh yes, well, did you know Cain had a son? Did you know that so and so built a city and named it Erad and so forth.

And they would get sort of anecdotal information from these other people. But this specific story about Lamech is very detailed. We know the names of everybody in the family.

And this song in verse 23 and 24 is a song that Lamech wrote for his two wives. He didn't

post it on the city wall in Erad someplace. He said Ada and Zilla hear my voice.

And this is an integral part of the song. This is a little family thing. I've got pieces of sheet music that my dad wrote.

They're not out in the public domain. He plays them and family members, as far as I know, are the only ones that have really heard them. I've got the sheet music for that, but it's in the family.

How did we get this story in the Bible? How did Moses come upon this material? Some people believe that God sort of dictated all of these ages and names and so forth to Moses. And he was sort of in a trance and wrote it all down. But as we've seen in the past, it's very, very probable.

In fact, I'm certain of the fact that these were records in the library in Egypt deposited there by Joseph, who got them all the way back starting with Noah. Some of these were on clay tablets that probably came across in the flood in the ark with Noah. And that these genealogies and names and ages and so forth were preserved in record form so that Moses had some references.

And they're internal. I could get into a long discussion of the way these writings in the early chapters of Genesis have been analyzed and compared to other ancient writings. And you can see that they have characteristics that indicate that these were stories that had been written down at some point.

Even to the formula, these are the generations of. In Hebrew. It occurs at regular intervals like you find at the bottom of cuneiform tablets found at Ebla and Nuzi and Mari and other ancient civilizations where you would end a story with a little notation.

Or they have little markers just like this. So what's the point here? We've got this very detailed story from way at the end of the Cainite line. How did we come into possession of it? Well, let's just put a little hold on that.

The other thing is these statements in verse 20, 21 and 22 about the three sons of Lamech. Ada bore Jabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.

In verse 21, Jubal is the father of all those who play the harp and flute. All those who dwell in tents and have livestock. All of those who play the harp and the flute.

Well, this is before the flood, isn't it? It wouldn't matter how many flute players and harp players and tent dwellers and goat herds they were the fathers of. They all got wiped out in the flood, right? So what is the meaning of this statement? What significance could it possibly have that these individuals are the progenitors of people who engage in these particular occupations as a general rule if they all got wiped out in the flood? Well, the

only one possible conclusion is they didn't all get wiped out in the flood. If Jabal and Jubal are the fathers of people who engage in these occupations, some of their descendants survived the flood.

Well, they're Cainites, right? Noah is a Sethite. So where would the survivors of the Cainite line be? They have to be on the ark if they survived the flood. Where would they be? Well, they would have to be the spouses.

So it makes sense to me as a possibility that we have here the in-laws of one or more sons of Noah. Who do we know? Remember when the pronouncement of the curse is made by Noah over in Genesis? You get over to 9 and 10 of Genesis where they come out of the ark and so forth. And in chapter 9, verse 25, he says, Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants, he shall be to his brethren.

Then he says, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Shem. And you can go to Hebrews chapter 11 and the Shemites, the Semites, the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they are predominantly tent dwellers and livestock keepers, aren't they? So if Jabal is the father of all those who dwell in tents and have livestock, it suggests itself to me as a possibility that Jabal's daughter or granddaughter or someone is who Shem married.

Because the Bible says Jabal is the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. So somehow, I mean it's meaningless if they all got wiped out in the flood. Why would you even say it? What difference would it possibly make? So it seems likely to me that Shem's wife is from the line of Cain.

You have the same statement made about Jabal. He's the father of those who play the harp and the flute. I think the old King James says the organ.

Of course, you know, you get the idea they had a little pedal pumper there, and you think, my, that's kind of an anachronism. But our more modern translation is that these two musical instruments. Well, who's associated with musical instruments? You have the Greeks, you know, the panpipes.

They're very notable for their focus on the arts, their statues. And the Romans inherited almost all of their culture of any kind from the Greeks. And the Greeks are Japhethites.

And so you have that idea. And then you have Tubal-Cain, who was a forger of bronze and iron. Well, supposedly, there wasn't even any iron until you have the early, middle, and late Bronze Age, which are the early days of Israel.

Abram is supposed to be living in the early or middle Bronze Period before they even learned how to forge iron. So how could Tubal-Cain be associated with those who forged bronze and iron? Well, somebody had to survive the flood. Well, we know from the later

Old Testament, who are the forgers of iron? What happens when Saul and Jonathan are the only two soldiers in the whole Israelite army that have an iron sword? Because who are the forgers? It's the Philistines.

So the point here is it appears possible, at least, that the wives, both of Noah and of his sons, who are never mentioned, and this is one of the Bible's ways of sort of snubbing someone, is to refuse to mention their name. And you would think, as prominent as these ladies are in the history of the world, all of us are descended from these people. All of us somewhere trace back to one of those four ladies, well, in fact, to one of the three ladies that are married to the three sons of Noah, and all of us are descended from Noah and his wife, but we don't know Noah's wife's name.

And she had a name. And her daughter's-in-law had names, and the Bible refuses to mention them. Well, based on the fact that we have detailed stories from this generation of Lamech in the Cainite line and the statements that these sons are the fathers of those who engage in these things, it seems possible to me.

Now, why do I even bring that up other than it's just kind of interesting? Well, that's the main reason. But it also occurs to me that this is another example of the fact that it doesn't matter. You can be from the line of Cain.

You can be from the wrong side of the tracks. You can be from the wrong culture. You can have the wrong parents.

You can have all of the wrong factors in your favor. But if you're a wheel that directs yourself in the direction of the plan and the purpose of God, if you respond to God in faith, God brings you into deliverance, brings you into salvation. Turn with me to Matthew, the Gospel of Matthew chapter 1, where we can see a much more concrete illustration of this principle.

Matthew chapter 1. Everybody's going to be in Matthew chapter 1 here in another couple of months. In fact, as early as they start Christmas decorating and playing Christmas songs, they'll probably be doing it next week. We're only in October, but the Christmas decorations are already going up in the stores.

But everyone likes at Christmastime, which, of course, isn't the time when Christ was born at all. It's the winter solstice, and we've taken a pagan winter solstice festival and tried to convert it. The early Catholic Church did this to us.

But it's fine. So we have Matthew chapter 1, and it begins, The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. And now we start from Abraham, and we're going to trace forward the genealogy from Abraham to Christ.

Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar. Of course, the interesting thing there is we don't know

what nationality Tamar was.

Her name isn't necessarily a Hebrew name. But Judah picked out Tamar to be the wife of his son, Er, E-R. Well, Er was an evil man before the Lord, and the Bible says God killed him before he could have any children.

Now remember, this is Judah. What do we know about Judah, the tribe of Judah? Kings are going to come from Judah. So when Judah's first son, Er, doesn't turn out to be a good guy, God kills him, cuts him off.

So here's Tamar, and she's a widow, and she hasn't even had any children yet. Well, by the Levirate Law, the brother is supposed to marry the widow and have children with her. And these children are considered to be and treated as the sons of the dead elder brother.

He raises up an heir for his brother. Well, the second son's name is Onan. Well, Onan doesn't think this is a good idea.

He doesn't want to waste his time having children that are going to inherit all of his brother's stuff, and he's not going to get any of it. And his sons are not going to be the heirs of all of Judah's vast possessions. And so Onan, and he's famous in the Bible, he spilled his seed on the ground.

He went in there with Tamar, but he wouldn't let her conceive. Well, God got upset with him and killed him. Well, Judah only had three sons.

He had Er, Onan, and Shelah. Shelah is just a boy at the time that his older brothers are both killed by the Lord. He's not old enough to marry Tamar.

So Judah says, well, Tamar, you wait until Shelah grows up, and then you all get married, and you can raise up an heir to my son Er. Well, Shelah grows up and becomes a young man. He's marriageable age.

But Judah says, you know, every time I marry one of my sons to Tamar, he dies. So he decides it's something to do with Tamar, and he won't let Shelah marry her. His wife dies.

Judah's wife dies. And so now there's no adultery involved in what's about to take place. As soon as Judah's wife dies, Tamar hatches a scheme.

She dresses up like a harlot and waits by the road. She knows that after the time of Judah's mourning has passed, he doesn't have his wife anymore, and he may be looking for a physical relationship. And sure enough, she lures him in and seduces him.

And because she's a harlot, he figures he has to pay. He says, I'll send you a young goat from the herd. And she says, well, you don't have it with you.

How do I know you're going to pay me? And he says, well, I'll leave you a pledge. And he gives her his staff and his signet, which are his ID card. It's like his Social Security card and his driver's license.

He leaves them there. And he says, I'll send a guy with a goat, and you give me my stuff back. Well, as soon as he's out of sight, she packs up and takes off her harlot clothes and puts on her widow's weeds and goes back home.

And so the messenger comes with the young goat, and he can't find the harlot. He asks around. There's no harlot around here.

We don't know of any harlot in the area. So the messenger comes back with the goat and says, I couldn't find her. And he says, well, OK, fine.

Three months later, Tamar is pregnant. Judah is enraged because she has had some sort of illicit sex. And so he says, bring her out, and we'll burn her.

And she says, OK, fine. But before you do, let me just give you these things that belong to the man who did this to me. And he hands him back his ID card and his driver's license there, his staff and his signet.

And of course, he says, Tamar is more righteous than I. It was my fault because I denied her my son, which is hers by right, under the law that existed at that time, which is pre-Mosaic law, but it was understood. Which is another clue, by the way, that there was a lot understood about the purpose of God and the law of God even before it was written down in Moses' day. And so she, he, obviously they don't burn her.

And she goes ahead and comes to term and gives birth to twins. And as is so often found in the Bible, these twins are an issue. You have this whole idea of the elder serving the younger.

Remember, Jacob and Esau were twins. And Esau came out first, but Jacob was hanging on to his heel, like he was trying to pull him back in and be the firstborn. And of course, ultimately, Jacob gets the blessing instead of Esau.

Same thing happened with these two twins, because there's Perez and Zerah are the two sons that are born to Tamar by Judah. Well, Zerah was coming out first. His arm came out.

But, you know, there's twins, and it was kind of a difficult delivery, and his arm came out, but nothing else happened. And they said, well, you know, we don't know what's going to take place, but we think he's going to be the firstborn. So they tied a crimson cord around his arm so that they could tell him apart because they knew they were twins, and they wanted to be sure they could identify the firstborn.

Well, the arm with the cord on it went back up inside. And then when the babies were born, Perez came out, and he wasn't the one with the cord. So it's like he wrestled Zerah out of the way and came out so he could be the firstborn.

Well, this is Perez that is mentioned here in Matthew 1, verse 3. So in the line of Christ, you have Tamar specifically mentioned. She's a woman, and normally, especially, you know, the patriarchal focus of ancient times, it's very rare, in fact, it's extraordinary for a woman to be mentioned in a genealogical list. But she's mentioned, and why? Because she's a righteous woman.

Judah declares her to be righteous. He says, she's more righteous than I am. So she's worthy of note.

You come on down in verse 4. Ram is the son of Hezron, who was the son of Perez. Ram begot Amenadab. Amenadab begot Nashan.

And Nashan begot Salmon. Salmon, I'm pretty sure, was one of the spies that went and spied out the land the second time they went in, right before the walls of Jericho fell. Remember the spies that were hid under the flax on the roof by Rahab? Well, Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab.

Apparently, he was so grateful, they got married. Once the walls fell and Rahab and her family were preserved, Rahab married into the Israelite community. She married Salmon.

And Rahab is mentioned. Who is Rahab? Rahab is a Canaanite prostitute. But she's in the line of Christ.

What happened after that? They had a son, Boaz. Boaz has a son named Obed by Ruth. Ruth is a Moabitess.

Moab and Ammon are sons of incest, as we're going to see, from Lot. Lot, who's the unfaithful nephew, is going to wind up making both of his daughters pregnant. And the sons that each of them bear are Moab and Ammon.

Ruth and the Moabites are traditionally the thorn in the side and a curse to Israel. They're on the other side of the Jordan. But Ruth, from Moab, marries into the community of Israel.

She marries an Israelite. He dies. And you have that, Whithersoever thou goest, I will go.

And she comes back with her mother-in-law. But you look at these ladies. You look at Tamar.

You look at Noah's wife and perhaps Shem's wife. You look at Ruth and Rahab. You come on down to the time of David.

And David the king, in verse 6, begets Solomon by her of Uriah. Notice the Bible sort of snubs Bathsheba here because she has identified David had Solomon by another man's wife. Here's another.

This is an adulterous relationship. But Solomon is the result. All of these are mentioned in the Scripture, even though they may be from the wrong side of the tracks.

God can turn cursing to blessing in the presence of faith. Faith is the key. That's where you point the wheel.

When God tips the board, which direction are you going to roll? We're not marbles helpless in the grip of which way God tips the table. We have the ability to establish direction. And when God prompts, when God, through circumstances, says you've got to make a decision, you've got to choose, which way do we choose? Which way are we going to roll? If we choose the direction of faith, God blesses.

And God can turn cursing to blessing. You can be a Moabite. You can be an Ammonite.

You can be a Syrian like Naaman. You can be a Cainite, as appears to be the case back in the generation of Noah. And yet you can be preserved and delivered because you have chosen to associate yourself with God and the things of God and the people of God.

This is the decision that Lot has failed to make when he departs from Abram. And this is the context of our story here in Genesis 13 and into Chapter 14. So I wanted to just review that principle because there is hope.

We talked in our Scripture reading this morning about are we just looking at the short term or do we raise our perspective and live in hope? Faith, hope, and love are the three great virtues that define life as believers. Hope is the ability to see beyond the immediate and to persevere in the face of our momentary light tribulations, as Paul calls them. He says we have this momentary light affliction.

It's not worthy to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed in the sons of God. To be able to raise up high enough, this is one of the things I learned during my time with the Navy, is that when you're standing on the bridge of a destroyer, 33 feet above sea level, there is a specific distance you can see to the horizon. Depending on how high you are above the water, there's a formula whereby you can calculate, based on the curvature of the earth and so forth, how far you can see.

If you see a ship in the old days of sail, you would just see the topsails, and then you'd see the gallions, and then you'd see the mainsail, and then eventually it would be what they would call hull up, where you could see the hull of the ship on the horizon. You could tell, you could estimate the distance and how long it might be before you would close and have to do battle with this ship, because based on your perspective and your height above the water, you knew how far you could see. Well, we are often operating

right at sea level, and all we can see is just what's right around us.

The Word of God and the Spirit of God can elevate us and let us see further and live in the light of what's happening out at the horizon, because it's coming. It's going to be here. It's a true, sure thing.

The Lord's coming back. The eternal future is going to happen, and we're going to wish, we're going to wish in an almighty way that we had lived in the light of the future while we're here. So let's go ahead and get that perspective now and be ready, is the idea, to live in hope.

When you go to Hebrews chapter 11, and we'll be there in a future lesson, we'll look again at what the New Testament says about Abram, who dwelt in tents, waiting for a city whose founder and builder is God. That's why Abram is content to be a sojourner, and we're going to see that he's called, later on in chapter 14, a Hebrew, and that has something to do with his status as a sojourner rather than a villager. It's very interesting, by the way.

You remember we saw that it says the Canaanite and the Perizzite are in the land? There's all kinds of ites in the land. Why are these two mentioned? Well, the Canaanites, we know about them. They're under the curse God put on Canaan, and they reflect the disregard for God and the disregard for the institutions of God that are reflected in the birth of Canaan, in this incestuous relationship that Ham engaged in.

Who are the Perizzites, and why on earth are they mentioned? Well, Perez in Hebrew means village, and these are the dwellers. They're the village builders. They're the villagers.

If you think about the Canaanites, what's their outstanding characteristic throughout the Old Testament? What's the first thing you think of when you think of the Canaanites? They're evil, and they're combative. The Israelites are constantly fighting with the Canaanites. The Canaanites are always resisting.

They don't want to make a treaty. They don't want to settle. They don't want to come and join themselves to Israel.

They're combative. So you have the Canaanites and the Perizzites in the land, looking at the land with its spiritual significance, its symbolic significance to us. When we come into the land by faith, like Abram does, when we're in that place of fellowship, of worship, of testing, and of hope, what are we going to encounter there? Well, the Canaanites and the Perizzites dwell in the land.

There are going to be those who oppose us. There's going to be combat, and there's going to be the people who have seized onto things that are a part of our promise. You've got the villagers.

It's like Israel over in the land today. What's the big problem in the Middle East? The people who have squatter's rights, because they came to Israel and settled down and claimed land about 100 years ago, the Palestinians don't want to leave. They've settled.

They're like Perizzites. They've grabbed little pieces of the land, and they don't want to leave. And so there are things that might rightfully, we think, be a part of our promise, be a part of what God has promised to us, and yet somebody else has laid hold of it.

People want to take it by force. The Canaanites are in the land. They want to take and seize it by force.

The Perizzites are in the land. They've settled and laid claim to things that God is promising to Abraham. It seems so strange that you've got the Canaanites and the Perizzites in the land, but God says, walk all up and down in the land.

All of this is yours. And Abraham says, well, I've sure got a lot of tenants in here. Where's my rent check for all these people that are on my property here? But Abraham knows that this is a promise of God that is looked at in hope.

It's a future expectation. He knows right now he can't just walk into some little village and kick all the Perizzites out. He can't necessarily go do battle with every single Canaanite and drive them out of the land.

But he believes God when God says, all of this land is yours. I give it to you and your descendants forever. When we come into the land by faith, when we start trying to live in the light of those four things we talked about in the land, the land is entered by faith and it's dwelt in by faith, we're going to find Canaanites and Perizzites in the land.

There's going to be combat. There are going to be people that want to fight over these things and fight for these things. There's going to be people that think that this is their possession and they don't want to give it up.

Remember over in the New Testament, Jesus talked about this in Matthew chapter 11. I should have just left you there in Matthew for a moment. Let's go back to Matthew chapter 11.

Jesus is talking about his cousin, John the Baptist. And John has been seized by Herod and is in prison. And they come and tell Jesus about it.

And in Matthew chapter 11, Jesus talks a little bit about John. And he says in verse 11 of chapter 11, Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women, there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist. But he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence

and the violent take it by force. This is kind of a puzzling thing. If it's a heavenly kingdom, how can you violently take it? Well, the men of violence are the Pharisees.

The men of violence are the rulers of this world, like Herod. Herod has seized John the Baptist and put him in prison. But he hasn't killed him, has he? He brings him up and lets him talk.

He wants to hear John speak. And he kind of wavers. He doesn't know if he wants to believe him or if he wants to execute him.

So he just keeps him in prison. And we study that whole chapter in Mark about how Herod really sums up the ambivalence in the nation of Israel. On the one hand, they resist and they want to put this in a box, Jesus and his message and so forth.

On the other hand, they have the opportunity to respond. And Herod, as the king in Israel at this time, sort of symbolizes the whole nation where he's under pressure to get rid of John, but he's torn. He's teetering.

He doesn't know which way to go. But when the pressure is on and he's forced to choose, here comes John's head on a platter. And this is ultimately what the nation of Israel does with Jesus.

When the pressure comes on and they have to choose, give us Barabbas, and Jesus is crucified. But Jesus says that from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force or try to press into it. This verb that says take by force has the idea of pressing in.

People want to seize this by force. This is what's going to happen in Genesis 14. These outsiders, we talked about the two groups of kings.

You've got the western group and the eastern group. And the western group are actually living on the eastern edge of the land. These are right on the Jordan.

They're living in the Jordan plain. And you've got the Sea of Galilee and then straight down you have the Jordan River and then you have the Dead Sea. And right around the Dead Sea and along the Jordan you have this real green fertile plain.

This is on the eastern border of what God has promised to Abraham. Well, beyond the Jordan, way back over in Mesopotamia where Abraham came from in Asia Minor and all of those areas that are far away from the land, this is the eastern coalition. That's where Keter Laomer, the king of Elam and all these other people are going to come from.

They look over and see the land of promise. And they think, hey, that is pretty good land. Let's go down there and raid it.

So these eastern kings are going to come and attack the land by coming across the

Jordan or around the southern part of the Dead Sea and try to come up there and seize all of this stuff and get it for themselves. So they're going to come in and try to take it by force. How do you obtain possession of the land? Do you get a big confederation together and a big army and go in and raid it? That's what Keter Laomer is going to do to get the land.

Abram, the man of faith, has simply believed God and obeyed God and God has promised it to him. So who's going to ultimately end up with the land? Abraham or Keter Laomer? Well, in the short term it looks like Keter Laomer as we will see. But Jesus talks about this because even in the spiritual sense there are people who say I'm going to lay claim to the blessings of God by my work, by my effort.

I'm going to force God to give it to me because I am so righteous. I'm going to do these good things. I'm going to evangelize.

I'm going to help the poor. I'm going to go live in a far off country and be a missionary. I'm going to do good deeds.

I'm going to go down to church. I'm going to sing in the choir and be on the committees and teach Sunday school and do this, that and the other. And people say I'll take it by force.

God will have to bless me because of what I'm doing instead of trust and faith and hope and love. And it's a subtle distinction. A lot of people fool themselves and say, well, I'm doing all of these things because I love God and because I love other believers.

I love the lost and I want to go... Only an individual and God knows what's really going on as far as motivation. Are we trying to work off guilt? Are we trying to earn God's respect? Earn God's approval? Are we trying to take the land by force? Or are we, through faith, entering the land and dwelling in the land? That's what Jesus is talking about there. And that's the background again of what we have in Genesis 14.

So with these kings coming in, this big confederation, you have Amraphel, king of Shinar. Shinar, by the way, is Babylon. Ariok, the king of Ellessar.

Nobody knows exactly where that is. It appears to have been up in the northeastern realm there toward Mesopotamia, Asia Minor. Keterleomer, the king of Elam.

And Tidal, king of nations. This, in Hebrew, is Goyim. And even in modern Hebrew, the Goy are the Gentiles.

But what does it mean here? Obviously, all of these people are Gentiles. What does it mean, Tidal, king of nations? Well, he is apparently the leader of a confederation of many small tribes that are up in the area of the Hittites, up north from the promised land. There's an interesting equivalent to this.

You may remember in the New Testament there's an area up in there called Pamphylia, where Paul does some ministry and so forth. They pass through the region of Pamphylia. Well, Pamphylia in Greek means many nations.

It means the equivalent of Goyim. So there's a region up there that the Greeks called Pamphylia. And Tidal, if that name goes back all the way into the Semitic dialects, the equivalent of that is Goyim, the many nations.

So they're all from north or east of the land. They're far away, this eastern confederation. The western kings that they're making war with are the king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah.

You notice their names. You've got Bera, king of Sodom, Bersha, king of Gomorrah, and we have this big laundry list of names. You think, my goodness, let's just get through this list and find out what happens in the story.

But it's interesting because you've got four kings listed here. Bera, Bersha, Shinob, and Semeber. Well, the first two names, Bera and Bersha, begin with the letter Bet, which is the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

The second two kings begin with Sin, which is the second to last letter in the Hebrew alphabet. So instead of A to Z, you've got B and Y here for their names. Secondly, Bera, the king of Sodom.

B is a preposition in Hebrew and a lot of words that begin with B. B means in, or by, or with. And so this is in, by, or with. Ra, which is R, A, and this is the word for evil in Hebrew.

So he's inevil. He's inevil, the king of Sodom. Rasha is also a word for evil in Hebrew.

And so the king of Gomorrah is Ba-Rasha. So you have Ba-Ra in evil and you have Ba-Rasha in wickedness. Two different words for gross wickedness.

And these are the names of the kings. And we get the idea that maybe this isn't what their mama named them when they were born. Little Prince Evil down here and Little Prince Wickedness over here in Gomorrah.

But these are probably sort of tongue-in-cheek changes that the people gave to them to signify their disposition, their nature. Shinab and Semeber. Again, these seem to be indefinite names.

Ab, A-B means father. And Semeber, to make a long story short, these are also names that, like Semeber means his name is forgotten. And Shinab means his father was someone.

All four of these are like their names have been painted out of history by God in the

divine record. Because they're evil, as we've seen, you don't get a worthy mention sometimes in the scripture. So these are almost like titles or nicknames, pejorative nicknames, rather than their actual names.

So you've got these four kings and the king of Zeboim, and it doesn't give his name. It just says he's the king of Bela, which is Zoar. So you've got the five kings of the plain.

We don't really know their names because they're all evil and they're all eventually going to be destroyed. And they get defeated by this big coalition. They're right on the edge of the land in the Jordan plain.

And Keterleomer and all these people from the northeast come down and beat them and put them under submission. They say, you pay us. You've got all this fertile land and all this silver and gold and stuff.

You send this stuff to us or we're going to come down and really get on you. So for 12 years, they serve. In verse 4, 12 years they serve Keterleomer.

They're sending tribute and they're just being heavily taxed so that they don't get defeated again militarily. Well, they do this for a dozen years and then they get tired of it. They think this is no good.

We're not going to do this anymore. I'm tired of 12 years. Now they don't remember the battle and the bloodshed and the strength of the army.

They're far away. We're not going to do this. So in the 13th year, they rebelled.

Well, once the tribute started coming, Keterleomer says, All right, I warned you. You quit sending the tribute. I'm going to come down.

I will either love you and bless you or I'm going to hate you and curse you. So he's going to come down and hate and curse them. In the 14th year, verse 5, Keterleomer and the kings that were with him came and attacked the Rephaim and Ashtaroth, Kanaim, the Zuzim and Ham, the Emim and Shaveh, Kiriathim.

Who are all these people? These are not the people in the plain. If you look on a map and if you can plot what's happening here, there's a thing called the King's Highway that runs sort of north-south, far to the east. It's on the other side of the Jordan.

It runs up and down sort of parallel to the Jordan River. It's outside the land of promise. It's the King's Highway.

It runs between Syria, goes down into the Negev and around eventually into either the Sinai Peninsula or Egypt. But it's sort of a north-south path. And this is the route of travel.

Well, these little Enes and Ites and so forth live along there. Keterleomer, remember, he's up north and east. Well, he says, I'm just going to march.

I'm going to blaze a path. He's like Sherman marching to Georgia here. So he starts at the upper area and he's just getting ever closer to the guys down there in the cities of the plain.

And these are pretty formidable people. The Rephaim, they're mentioned later on in Deuteronomy. These are the tall guys, the guy that had the nine-cubit bed that some of the giants that were in the land are Rephaim.

These are big. And so the news of this is coming and they're just getting more and more panicky. Boy, maybe we should have sent that tribute after all.

Look at the headlines today. They defeated the Rephaim. They've sacked the Rephaim.

The Rephaim are defeated. Now the Zuzim. These are mentioned later as the Zamzumim down in Deuteronomy and so forth.

And these are another sturdy warrior race, big guys. They got defeated. Keterleomer is just rolling up the carpet, coming down from the north to the south.

And there's just more and more beads of sweat pouring out down there in Sodom and Gomorrah and Zoar and so forth. So the Zumim and Ebim and all these other people, the Horites in the mountains of Seir. Remember what Seir is? Seir is Edom.

That's where Esau's going to go in the future. He's off to the east. But this is closer and closer to the land of promise, closer and closer to the plain of Jordan there.

The Horites in the mountains of Seir as far as El Paran, which is by the wilderness. Then they turned back and came to Ishpat. And if you could imagine this, this is like the letter J. Think about it.

You've got the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River coming straight south, and then the Dead Sea. You've got the King's Highway, which it'll eventually be, that goes straight north and south on the right side of that, on the eastern side. They've come all the way down, marched and defeated all these people.

Now they're going to do a fish hook, like a J. They're going to come up around the end of the Dead Sea and just roll everybody up. It's like this big steamer we're coming down. So in verse 7, 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 Hazazon, wherever that is.

It's all down there south of the Dead Sea. So they're making this big hook. And so now the people are just in a panic.

What are we going to do? They're beat even before they get attacked. Well, what happens? We're going to have to wait until next week because we're out of time. But when we come back, we'll see what happens in this big, massive...