

## SERVICE TRANSCRIPT

27<sup>th</sup> June 2021

*Service Leader: Ian Battiste*

*Speaker: Mark Reid*

### Prayer 1

Heavenly Father, although we are not together in person at the church, we come together still as one body and one spirit worshipping and praising you from wherever we are this morning and we come before you with faith and hope in our hearts. We open our hearts, minds and souls to worship you. Thank you that today we dwell in your kingdom and live in your presence. Thank you that as we come before you in worship, we join with all Christians across the world to glorify your holy name. Finally, Lord let your spirit lead us; guide us and inspire us in our time of worship this morning. A-men"

### Psalm 121 vs 1-2

In Psalm 121: vs 1-2 it says this: "I lift up my eyes to the mountains where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.". A couple of years ago I was in North Wales on a walking weekend. Those of you who have had the privilege to walk in Snowdonia National Park may have heard of the trail to the top of Snowdonia via the infamous knife edge ridge called Crib Coch; with no markers and sheer drops on either side it's certainly not for the faint hearted. My brother had taken the knife edge ridge before and told us we would be in good hands if we followed him; so, a group of us decided to take the challenge and ascended Mount Snowdon via Crib Coch. As we made our way up the steep and arduous mountain laden, we eventually came to the knife edge ridge of Crib Coch some 3000 feet above sea level. At this point my legs started to feel as if they were going to give way and thoughts of "I can't do this" started to repeat in my mind I then found myself stopping on the spot and dropping to my hands and knees; and crawling the rest of the way along the knife edge of Crib Coch. At one point I remember stopping and looking up and praying "wherever you are Lord; please don't let me fall, please get me through this" As the wind battered me, I crawled slowly along the ridge of Crib Coch. Seconds and minutes felt like hours. It was at this point I suddenly had Psalm 121 come to mind "I lift up my eyes to the mountains where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD" It was at that point I realised the Lord hadn't left me he was with me protecting me and reminding me to put my faith and trust in him. We eventually made the summit of Mount Snowdon which was a beautiful sight and a reminder of Gods beauty and creation. You see God had never left me he was with me the whole time, I just needed reminding that even when we seem to be going through the roughest storms of life God is still there with us. We just need to lift our eyes higher than our circumstances, higher than our trials and tribulations. It is then we can see the Creator and saviour, the One who calls us by name for he is the one who will lead us, guide us, protect us and watch over us today and every day. - Amen

## Response for call to Worship

Watching God, we give thanks that you are not restricted to one place or time.  
***We come together to worship the all-seeing Creator of the heavens and the earth.***

Sheltering God, we give thanks that we can rely on your strength and guidance.  
***We come together to give thanks that God understands our human vulnerability.***

Abiding and Trustworthy God, we give thanks and celebrate your nearness, and your continuing presence with us, as we journey towards our hope and home in you.  
***We come together to share the knowledge that God is always with us, and that as individuals or a community, we can trust God's watching and sheltering presence.***

## Prayer 2

Heavenly Father thank you that you are our constant presence; thank you that you are always watching over us and your creation. Thank you that we can lift our eyes to you for help and guidance; and not just in times of trouble but during any time; thank you that you promise to hold us so that we will not stumble. Thank you that you are the strength to those who are weak; a guide to those who are lost; hope for those who are vulnerable and a comfort to those who are lonely. Thank you that you are a God that is constant and protective, sheltering us from evil, and always with a watchful attention in our comings and goings, and thank you that our help and our hope comes from you our God, creator and sustainer of the whole universe. Amen

## Video – Trusting God

In this next video from the EBA, Adrian Semerene who is the Minister of Gamlingay Baptist Church talks to us about trusting God no matter where we are and no matter what journey we are on; we trust that God is with us. After this short video we shall come together as a family of God recognising, he is an amazing God who is all powerful, all indescribable and who is uncontainable as sing 'From the Highest of Heights'

*Song: Indescribable*

## Prayers for Paul & Sarah Brown

### Sermon: WALKING WITH GOD IN A DANGEROUS WORLD Part 2

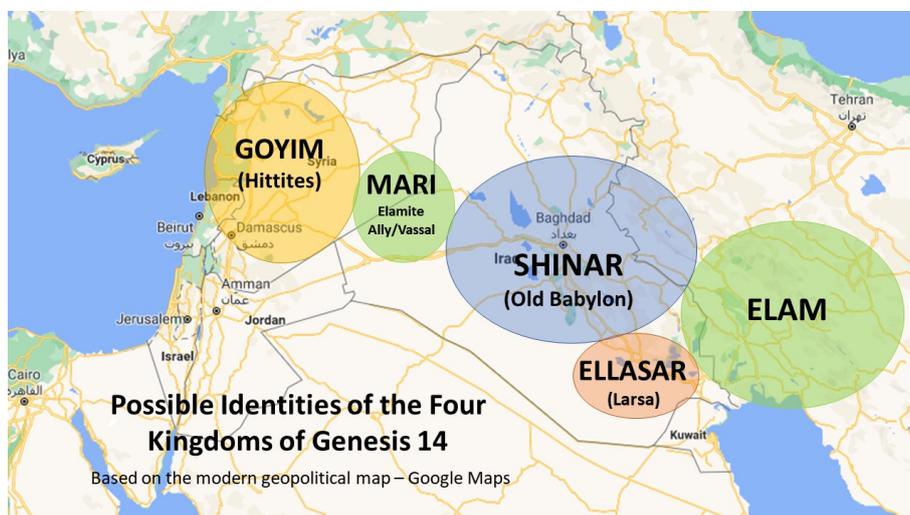
A little earlier, Adrian Semerene talked about taking a journey with God and trusting Him on that journey, however difficult it seems. Abram went on a journey to Canaan, trusting in what God had promised. And all went well until he decided to follow his own instinct and leave Canaan for Egypt and then use deception to further his ends.

Back in Canaan and with God again with him, he finds success, so much so that he and his nephew have to go their separate ways to stop competing for the same grass. But God re-affirms his promises to Abram and as he continues to trust God, he thrives. But that wasn't going to last as a problem that had nothing to do with him or the land of Canaan emerged which would show how Abram's trust for God had developed. Here's the story.

**Reading: Genesis 14**

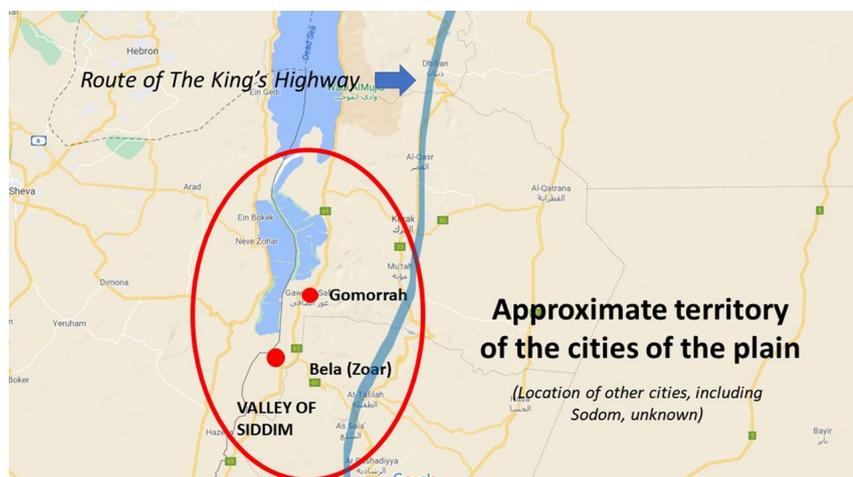
It came in the form of these rather exotically named kings and places that many of us probably never heard of. We read this morning of their conflict and their battle and how Abram got sucked in.

Their names may sound strange to us but the four kings at the beginning of the chapter are well-known to archaeologists and historians of the early Babylonian period. They were an alliance based in Mesopotamia and here's a map with the kingdoms in it.



The Hebrew writers called the places different names to the original as is common with names being translated from one language to another.

Because of time I've left a bigger description of them and what they were waging war about with five tinpot kings of city states near the Dead Sea, who we know less about because their civilisation was totally wiped out in Abram's generation – more in a later week.



The chapter pretty well covers the conflict. The four powerful kings from the north had controlled the city states of the plain for 12 years, they decided to rebel in the thirteenth and the northern kings come rampaging down in the fourteenth and attack them (and neighbouring nations), then pillage their cities and take valuables and food, together with prisoners.

And that's where Abram comes in because his nephew Lot, who had moved into Sodom was one of those captured and taken away with his possessions.

Abram was safely ensconced up in the hills at Hebron and not involved in any of the action. We know from later in the chapter that he did not want to be associated with Sodom (and presumably the adjacent cities) . God had blessed him by his remaining within the hills of Canaan and had had made good allies with brothers Mamre, Eschol and Aner who were Amorites living in the Hebron region. Abram was now a significant nomadic lord, and his servants doubled up as a well-trained army; necessary for protection in the wild hills, villages and towns of Canaan.

We then read of of the way Abram and his Amorite allies routed the Mesopotamian army and harried them almost all the way to Damascus, until he had retrieved all the people and possessions including Lot. It was on paper an unlikely victory, some commentators have suggested Abram was outnumbered 10:1. That said, the returning army would have been depleted by the battle of the Valley of Siddim and slowed down by the wounded and prisoners carrying the plundered wealth. But it was still a remarkable feat by Abram and his Amorite friends – something Abram puts down to God.

So what can we learn from Abram's victory over the four kings?

### **God is trustworthy when we follow him**

We know from what Abram said to Melchizedek, that he trusted God for this endeavour. It wasn't like Egypt – it couldn't be. He had albeit 318 men facing an army of thousands. The battle belonged to the Lord.

Jesus calls us to follow Him and if you've been a Christian for a while, you know that God often asks us to make steps of faith that go beyond common sense. As I said a few weeks ago, faith is spelt RISK. We have to trust God when He calls us to do the improbable and even the seemingly impossible. We will see God upping the ante with Abram in later chapters because of this event.

That said please note that God doesn't expect us to serve Him and follow Him unprepared. Yes, it was unlikely that 318 men and a few Amorites could beat a big Mesopotamian force, but they were trained in warfare, particularly hill warfare against enemies who would steal their flocks at night – now they used their skills to take back people and possessions using night raids on the Mesopotamian column. And Abram trusted God to pull off this unlikely victory.

The battles in life and faith God calls us to do things can seem impossible sometimes. As we look at God's word, He calls us to battle with Him against sin, death and satan. It's bad enough with having to deal with something we can see in our troubled, dangerous world, let alone an enemy we can't see, and principalities and powers in this dark world that we don't really understand. How do we cope? Let's have a little look at a familiar passage I'm sure.

*Ephesians 6:10-18 (NIV)*

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

*18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*

God doesn't expect us to be in His battle unprepared and unprotected. He provides us with the means to serve Him in the battle of life. He gives us armour, he gives us a weapon – the word of God and He gives us communication (prayer) and the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. If we desire to do God's will then we ensure we are equipped to serve. I've done sermons on this before and we shall explore being prepared in the items for reflection and discussion this week.

We do that through being part of the life of the church. That's been difficult these last months, and I praise God that so many of you took the opportunity to read and also explore online stuff as part of your preparation for when we return to something nearer face to face church life and fellowship.

We face so much change and so many challenges in the next months as we seek to walk with God as a church in the post Covid world – let's be ready and prepared.

### **God deserves our worship**

Abram heads for home with the recovered goods and the freed prisoners and this rather enigmatic figure Melchizedek, King of Salem come out to meet him. Who was he? We don't know much. Some commentators say that Salem was short for Jerusalem. But it was not called that until David renamed Jebus as Jerusalem. Others say Melchizedek is an example of a Theophany – an appearance of God in human form. Certainly the name Melchizedek, King of Salem literally translates as King of Righteousness, King of Peace which are both terms associated with God. His identity remains enigmatic. What we are actually do know is that he was a Priest of the Most High God – he was appointed of God and Abram recognised him as such. Melchizedek brought out bread and wine, presumably as

refreshment and accepted a tenth of the spoils of battle as worship to God for the victory, but of course as Christians, we see symbolism in the bread and wine.

If you know your Letter to the Hebrews well, you also know how the priesthood of Christ is attributed to being after the order of Melchizedek – an priest ordained by God and not through birth as Levites were.

The priesthood of Christ is a big subject and I preached on it at the end of last year and I don't plan to go into who Melchizedek any deeper at this point, but instead direct you to my sermon for October 12<sup>th</sup> 2020 which has study materials too. The link is below.

<https://sermonindex2020.blogspot.com/2020/10/our-great-high-priest.html>

Today I'm focussing on Abram's worship. He recognised that God had delivered it into his hands and gave Melchizedek a tenth as a mark of thanks and worship to God. That's why giving is part of our worship – because we recognise our thankfulness to God for all that He has brought into our lives. When we walk with God, He prepared us to face life's challenges, He gives us our victories, He showers us with blessings, we see answered prayer, we see Him at work in the lives of others we understand more of what an amazing God He is – and as we do, we worship Him – and the giving back to God some of what He's blessed us with, is one way in which we do that as Abram did with Melchizedek. Here it was money but worship is also about praise is also about service, and is about walking with God in obedience to Him.

In the last year we have all got out of the habit of regularly worshipping together. We have worshipped at home including looking at videos like this which covers the ground of what we do at church on Sunday mornings. But it isn't the same as being there and worshipping together – which is why I'm disappointed we are not starting live worship next week but have to wait to the 25<sup>th</sup> July. Once we are out of the habit, of meeting together, other things can slip. I know some of you have realised this and consciously make an effort to spend time with God and use what resources there are to build you up spiritually.

Once we are out of the groove, it is easy to let things slip and forget how God has blessed us. We stop walking closely with Him and we find ourselves in the situation we sung about earlier, we forget about who we are in Christ.

The contrast between Abram and Lot couldn't be greater than here. Lot chose the cities of the plain, he ended up gravitating into Sodom. He got captured by the victorious kings and rescued by Abram. Did he worship with Abram? No, he went back to Sodom – a decision that he lived to regret.

God calls us to worship before our Great High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek – Jesus. Are we worshipping? Yes? Is that at every opportunity? Or are we slipping? When we don't walk with God, we walk into spiritual danger, which brings us to the final point.

### **We have a God who demands integrity**

Abram was determined to step back from identifying with the King of Sodom. He went into battle with his Amorite friends to rescue Lot, not because He wanted to align himself with

the cities of the plain. Quite the reverse, he knew how bad Sodom was and when the king of Sodom told him to keep the spoils as a “thank you” Abram refused because he didn’t want to have any hint that the King of Sodom had made him rich. It was a question of integrity.

I talked a bit about integrity last week so what I’ll say here other than what makes our world dangerous is that we live in a world short of integrity. If you do the study this week, I’ll be asking you to list as many integrity failures we find in our modern society – in politics, in Government, in business, in law enforcement, in commonly held attitudes. You’ll find common acceptance of values that we know as Christians are wrong and as Genesis would put it, things that are “evil in the sight of the Lord.” How do we live in a world like that, yet not align ourselves with it? That’s the challenge for us as we seek to walk with God.

For Abram it meant missing out on opportunities to expand his flocks and do business with the city states. On that day, Abram was treated with respect as a victor with values. I’ve found in practice that people of integrity are respected and trusted in our society more than we think. We see that difference in integrity between Abram and Lot who instead of standing on principles, thought it was OK to compromise on his values and blend with the people around him in Sodom.

Are you being tempted to do something you know is wrong? Or have been doing something you know is wrong? It’s time to stop. Time to ask God to give you the wisdom to exit gracefully and find strength to walk as you should before Him. We are coming up to another big change in life in four weeks as so-called Freedom Day approaches. Please use the present time to reflect on your life, that by His Spirit, God will shape you into the person of integrity He calls you to be.

Let’s pray shall we?

Father

Thank You that in Christ you have given us every means to live with integrity in a dangerous world. We pray that by Your Spirit that you will help us to put Your armour on and give us the desire to prepare ourselves spiritually for everything that gets thrown at us. Fill us again with that desire to recognise your presence and activity in our lives that we may recognise Your presence and worship You. May Your Spirit give us the strength to resist that temptation to compromise with the world, but instead be salt and light, bringing and being good news to our friends, family and community

We ask this in Jesus’ name

Amen.

*Song: The Battle Belongs to the Lord*

### **Prayer 3**

Heavenly Father, thank you for your presence and your teachings this morning thank you that you are with us and that you watch over us, protecting and shielding us. Thank you for

the roof that shields us from the sun, for the walls that shield us from the storms and for the bed that keeps us warm at night. Thank you that we can lift our eyes to you, the one who keeps us safely wrapped in his arms, the one who preserves our life and the one who watches over all our comings and goings. Thank you to you Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. Amen

### **Blessing**

May the strength of God sustain you; may the power of God preserve you; may the hands of God protect you; may the way of God guide you and may the love of God go with you this day and forever more – Amen.

### **For Reflection & Discussion**

Please read Genesis 14 again before starting

1. After his debacle in Egypt Abram was blessed as he returned to Canaan. Have you ever a situation in your life that God showed you how trustworthy He is. We are told God blesses those who trust Him, but how have you found that works in your walk in life and expectation of your eternal future?

Read Ephesians 6:10-18

2. Oliver Cromwell once said “Trust in God and keep your powder dry.” What experience have you had as a Christian of being prepared to follow where God leads? How does the “Armour of God” passage in Ephesians 6 help us to prepare to serve God in our present situation?

3. What does the part of the passage about Melchizedek tell us about the nature of worship?

4. Think of present day failures in integrity that are apparent in the behaviour of politicians, business people, influential people or just in people we know. Why do you think we often accept lack of integrity as a norm or acceptable? How does acting with integrity as a Christian further God’s kingdom? Think of situations you have come across where integrity has a Christian has made a difference for you.

### **APPENDIX**

#### **What was the Battle of the Valley of Siddim about?**

Much of what we know and what we can glean from the Bible and archaeology is conjecture as we’re not told directly why the Mesopotamian kingdoms wanted to exercise that level of control over this territory, but here is what is for me the most plausible theory.

So what was it about? It’s one of those times when we can see a Bible story reflected in archaeology; most remarkable as this was the early Bronze Age and besides the Bible, there’s actually some written history that allows us to identify who some of these people were and what the likely cause of the conflict was. The four kings at the beginning of the chapter were Mesopotamian. Here’s one theory as to who was who. It’s not universally

accepted but is interesting. There was only one time when the core Mesopotamian kingdoms had an alliance with the Hittites and this was at the time of Babylonian king Hammurabi 1. It possibly corresponds with Abram's time but it depends on how you date Biblical events. This alliance dates from about 1800 BC

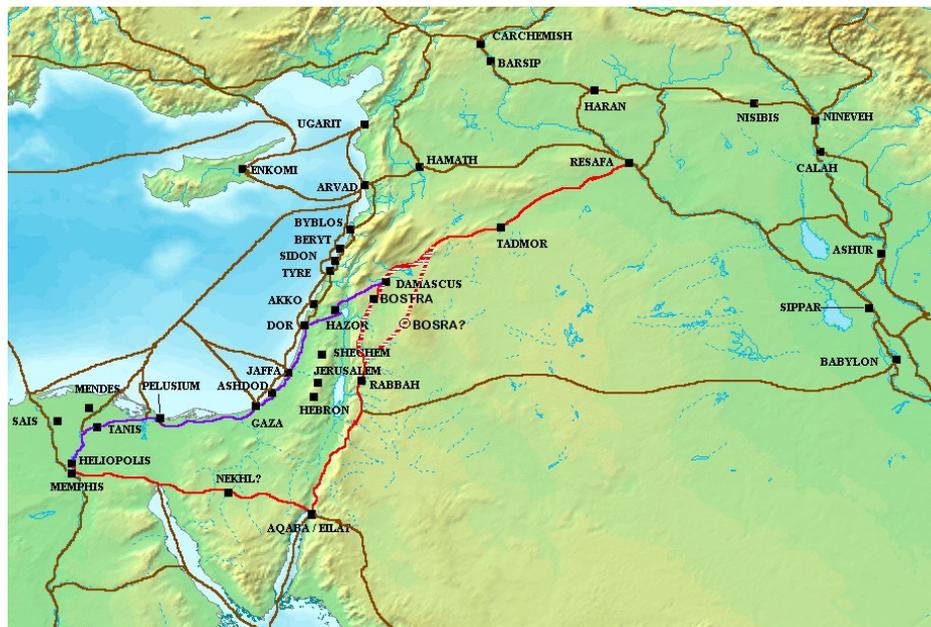
Here's the list and their names from Archaeology – remember that names often get changed in translation – we do exactly the same when we transliterate foreign names into English.

Name from Gen. 14:1	Name from Archaeology
Amraphel king of Shinar	Hammurabi ( Ammurapi) king of Babylonia
Arioch king of Ellasar	Eri-aku king of Larsa
Kedorlaomer king of Elam	Kudur-Lagamar king of Elam
Tidal, king of nations ( <i>goyim</i> )	Tudhulu, son of Gazza

One name stands out in this list and that's HAMMURABI who went on to be the first really big empire builder in Mesopotamia, famous for his famous legal Code of Hammurabi.

#### MESOPOTAMIA

At this time he wasn't and the big power in the area was Elam, but Kudur-Lagamar (Kedorlaomer) wasn't big enough, powerful enough and rich enough to conquer the others so they had a military alliance to protect their mutual interest.



Main Trade routes about 1800 BC

Red Line: The King's Highway Blue Line: Via Maris Brown: Other routes

And their mutual interest was a strategic trade route from Mesopotamia to the other major power in the area - Egypt. It was called The Kings Highway (red line on map) and ran from Damascus (at that time in Hittite territory) along the eastern flank of the Jordan valley and Dead Sea to Aqaba and then where it split to serve Egypt and western Arabia. The local tribes like the Amorites and Amalekites benefited from the route as did city states like Sodom and Gomorrah, but if they got greedy then they could disrupt trade, which the Mesopotamian states just wouldn't allow. The problem was that the cities of the plain *had* got greedy.

But the Mesopotamians weren't powerful enough or rich enough to occupy, fortify and hold those places, so instead used what I would call classic Mafia tactics of paying them a visit to tell them that they must trade real nice, charge them an annual protection fee known as tribute, to guarantee that they weren't going to come and annihilate them. And you thought our world was a dangerous place!

They subdued all the nations along The King's Highway for 12 years as we read, but the kings of the five city states got fed up and rebelled, presumably by not sending tribute in the thirteenth year. They had obviously decided that they would stand and fight in the hope that they would win. It was a lost cause as we read.



*Green line: Route of Mesopotamian kings.*

*Red line: Abram's travels in Canaan.*

In the 14<sup>th</sup> year the Mesopotamian kings arrived with a large force, attacked tribal lands all the way down the King's Highway in order to send out a message that they were not to be messed with, before routing the five kings in the Valley of Siddim, and then drove the defeated soldiers into the tar pits where they perished if they were not lucky enough to escape into the hills. They then pillaged all five cities taking valuables and food, and slaves to carry it all.