

"Jesus Has A Coffin For Every Empire And Emperor"

Genesis 14:1-16

18 February 2024

JESUS WILL NOT FORGET YOU THE THIRD WEEK OF FEBRUARY.

I get that idea from something Ralph Davis said:

"Yahweh is Lord of the last day but also of every day. He will bring the consummation of his kingdom at last, but he will not forget you in the third week of September."

Jesus is sovereign over everything that happens in this world and over everything that happens in your life. He will bring His kingdom to pass. He will deal with all His enemies. Ain't nobody getting' away with nothin'. And, He will make everything new one day. He will make everything sad come untrue. He will wipe away every tear.

And, He will take care of *you* this week. He won't forget *you* this week. He is the Lord of the last day, but also of every day. He's even the Lord of the third week of February.

So, Christian, He will not forget you. And, He did not forget Abram & Co. He did not forget His promise to Abram, and He did not forget Lot when he was captured and carted off by some ancient Near Eastern thugs. Even then, Yahweh was King and Lord. Even when things went south, even when some ancient Near Eastern thugs flexed their muscles, Yahweh was in absolute control. Just like He is right now in your life.

Okay. We're in Genesis 14, so turn there in your Bibles. What we'll see today is what happens when you mess with God's people. You mess with the bull; you get the horns. And some kings with some very weird and hard to pronounce names will find that out about Abram's God, Yahweh.

Genesis 14.

LOOK AT VERSE 1...

In the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, these kings made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). And all these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, and the Horites in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the border of the wilderness. Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh) and defeated all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hazazon-tamar.

Again, I must ask you: Doesn't that just warm your heart? I know it's not exactly goosebump-inducing material. I know you might not slap one of these verses on a bumper sticker and then slap it on your car, but you just might after today's sermon.

Most preachers tackle all of Genesis 14 in one sermon, probably because it's easier to cruise through the first 16 verses so that they can get to that mysterious figure named Melchizedek. So, I purposely stopped at verse 16 because I wanted to challenge myself to preach a harder passage. And, to show you how much gold there is in weird or odd passages- especially one that's just about a bunch of kings with egos fighting one another.

How do you preach a sermon based on a passage where a bunch of ego-driven kings with weird names want to throw down and scrap with one another? And, how you preach a sermon based on a passage where a bunch of ego-driven kings with weird names want to throw down scrap with one another, and the passage doesn't even mention God's name?! Yahweh is not even mentioned in these verses, so how do you preach a sermon from this text?

Well, you just have to know where to look. You have to read between the lines. Because even though God's name is not mentioned, you get the gist that He is in control. The Hebrew word *king* is mentioned 28x in this chapter- 5 kings of Canaan and 4 kings of Mesopotamia- and yet it's the King of Kings who is-

"...upholding, directing, disposing, and governing all creatures, actions, and things...and kings..."

That's the banner that's waving over Genesis 14: Yahweh is King and nothing can stop His kingdom from coming. Not even 4 thug-kings from Mesopotamia who were bullying everyone on the playground.

So, here's what's going on. These 4 thug-kings from Mesopotamia- *Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim*- they went to war with the 5 other kings- *Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (Zoar)*. Why?

Because the 5 kings rebelled, most likely it's that they got tired of having to give their lunch money to these bullies. They probably had to pay these kings their "monthly dues" and after 12 years they had had enough.

So, the 4 king Mesopotamian posse goes on this rampage where they beat up all the kings/countries mentioned in verses 5-7. And, then they set their sights on the 5 king alliance that rebelled. Confused? Let simplify it:

4 tough guys bully 5 smaller kids. But, one day the 5 kids rebel. So, when the 4 bullies are out bullying people, they remember the 5 smaller kids and they decide to make them pay. Got it? Maybe this map will help:

* INSERT CHEDORLAOMER'S INVASION MAP

So, King Chedorlaomer and Co. travel all the way down south (THE RED ARROW). Then they make their way up north (THE OTHER RED ARROW) and they remember that these 4 kings owe them money. So, the 5 kings fight the 4 kings in the Valley of Siddim (THE PURPLE OVAL), and after the battle- which they won!- they take Lot hostage. And then later, Abram will sneak up on them near Dan (THE YELLOW BOX) and beat them up and rescue Lot.

So, let's get to the battle. The 5 kings are tired of being bullied, so they meet the 4 thug-kings on the playground after school.

LOOK AT VERSE 8...

Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out, and they joined battle in the Valley of Siddim with Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings against five. Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country. So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.

So, the fight doesn't go as planned for the 5 bullied kings. They get their tails beat and then take off running away. Some fall into some tar pits as they flee, and others run to the hills. So much for standing up to your bullies! Well, at least in this case, it didn't work. The bullies take all the cattle, sheep, servants, etc when they leave. And, they happen to take Lot with them too.

This is all typical ancient Near Eastern bully stuff: bully, scare, fight, plunder, steal, leave. The only difference is that these 5 bully-kings took one of Abram's relatives, his nephew Lot. They obviously haven't heard of Yahweh, Abram and Lot's God. But, they will soon find out. And they will find out because Abram found out what they did. And, Abram found out because of the providence of his God, Yahweh.

LOOK AT VERSE 13...

Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner. These were allies of Abram. When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.

Verse 13 has the providence of God written all over it. An unnamed man escaped and he went to tell Abram about what happened to Lot. You're supposed to read this and be reminded of the providence of God. This isn't chance. This isn't luck. This is sovereignty- sweaty and out of breath from running all night to tell Abram about his nephew. This is just how providence works. I love how Ralph Davis describes providence:

"Providence" is God's way of providing for the needs of his people. That's not all of it, but some of it. When I use "providence" here I mean that wonderful, strange, mysterious, un-guessable way Yahweh has of ruling his world and sustaining his people, and his doing it, frequently, over, under, around, through, or in spite of the most common stuff of our lives or even the bias of our wills.

That's what's oozing out of verse 13. Yahweh is providing for and taking care of Lot by causing a guy to escape from the 4 thug-kings and safely make his way to Abram's ranch. So, Even though His name is not mentioned in these verses, it's Yahweh who is in control, not the thug-kings. Remember, the Hebrew word "king" is used 28x in this chapter. It's a bunch of *Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar* doing what they want, acting they own the place, but it's Yahweh who is in control.

Genesis 14:13 is in the Bible to remind you of that wonderful, strange, mysterious, un-guessable way Yahweh has of ruling his world and sustaining his people, and his doing it, frequently, over, under, around, through, or in spite of the most common stuff of our lives or even the bias of our wills.

And, then to think, *"What might God do in my situation? How might God fix the mess I created? How might God redeem this circumstance? How will God turn this for good?"*

You see, Genesis 14:13 is in the Bible to remind you and me that God can do whatever He wants. He can cause a man to escape so that another man (Lot) doesn't get killed by 4 thug-kings. Genesis 14:13 is in the Bible to give you hope. To remind you that it's never over, never too late. To remind you that God is absolutely aware of everything happening in your life and you can trust Him. This is a kind of Providence that remembers. This is a kind of Providence that doesn't forget His people.

Who knew? 16 verses that never mention God's name can put wind on your sails and help you out on a Friday morning when you don't feel like carrying on in this life. Genesis 14:13 is in the Bible to remind you that-

JESUS WILL NOT FORGET YOU THE THIRD WEEK OF FEBRUARY.

Whatever you go through this week, Jesus won't forget you. He didn't forget Lot. And, neither did Abram. Abram rallied 318 men and off they went to rescue his nephew. And, they were successful. They saved Lot and got back all his cows, too. Abram showed faith. Obviously, he trusted Yahweh because he brought a stick to a gunfight. Just 318 men. And, yet Abram took off to rescue Lot and what stood in his way? Oh, just a 4 thug-king alliance that had just swept through Canaan and ravaged the six tribes mentioned in verses 5-7.

Abram needs to rescue his nephew because as he understands it, the promise will probably come through Lot. Abram takes off *in faith* to rescue Lot. Trusting that what Yahweh promised him would come true. It's like God's promise gave Abram a backbone. He heads off to rescue Lot, not in fear, but in faith, not knowing what would happen, but knowing that he would have as many descendants as the dust of the earth. Yahweh's promise gave him courage.

But, notice that Abram's faith isn't passive. Abram isn't a pacifist. He grabs his guns, and off he goes to get Lot. And, again, we are to see that it's Yahweh who is in control of everything in this chapter. Abram was an old man, probably 75 years old. And he only takes 318 men, and they defeat 4 kings and their army. You can file that under P for *PROVIDENCE*.

I want to point out something else here. There's a word that I don't know if y'all caught. It's in verse 11. Let me read it:

So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.

Do you see it? It's the third word: *enemy*. How are these 4 thug-kings described? They are the enemy. They are the enemy of the people of God. They have kidnapped Lot, one of God's people, therefore, they are the enemy. This is why Abram must deal with them.

Understand this: God has enemies and He deals with them. We see this in Genesis 14. God has enemies. That might bother you. But, as Flannery O'Connor said, *"The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it."*

Jesus is going to shake the heavens and the earth one day, like a snow globe. And when He returns in His final advent, He will tear down every rival kingdom. Genesis 14 reminds us that God is very much in control, and very much involved in the politics and affairs of the world.

Call me crazy, but what appears on the surface to be a sort of "boring" passage here in Genesis 14, it just might be what we need right now. You might want to highlight all 16 verses- I'm talking all 3 paragraphs. Or, at least the word "enemy" in verse 11. Oh, these 3 paragraphs may not give you the warm-fuzzies upon first reading, unless you're a war history buff, but these verses might be what the church needs to hear at this point in her history.

Isn't it something that we *always* need to hear? Don't we always need our noses rubbed into the good news of God's sovereign, powerful hand over all nations, kings, governments, and rulers? Don't we always need our noses rubbed into the truth that Jesus is going to deal with His enemies one day? Don't we all need our noses rubbed into the hope that ain't nobody getting' away with nuthin'?!

Don't we always need our noses rubbed into the fact that God always takes care of His people? Whether in the past, like Abram and Co., or in the present, like Grace Baptist Church of Santa Maria, CA, or in the future when Jesus returns and cracks some heads, don't we always need to be reminded of this?

I'm reminded that Martin Luther sang a little ditty, and it went something like this-

The body they may kill, God's truth abideth still.

His kingdom is forever.

His kingdom, not Chedorlaomer's, is forever. And, that might be enough to keep you going one more day. His kingdom is forever. That might be all your heart needs later this week. This is your God, Christian! He is sovereign. He is almighty. He raises up some politicians and takes others down. Nations come and go...*and that might include America!* Jesus demolishes kingdoms, and kings, and nothing gets by Him!

Ralph Davis says, "*Jesus has a coffin for every empire and emperor; the only true security is in the kingdom of the carpenter's Son.*"

Don't think for a second that anybody anywhere is getting away with anything. Genesis 14 is in the Bible to remind you that Jesus is coming back, on that final day, at His final Advent, and He's gonna crack some heads! You might want to rub your nose in Genesis 14 because Jesus is reminding you that every kingdom of this world will perish, but the kingdom of God is forever.

We know how the story ends: *the destruction of God's enemies*. Lot's rescue from captivity tells us that. So, we cry out to our city, we cry out to our neighbors to flee the wrath to come. God is going to overthrow and destroy His enemies at His final Advent, so make sure you flee to Jesus for salvation, if you haven't. Will you do that now? Run to Jesus and flee the wrath to come!

We want to take the real Jesus to our city. He's kind and merciful and gentle and caring and forgiving and gracious. But He's also the Judge. The Judge that every human being will stand before and give account. And, we have a very unique kingdom opportunity and responsibility here on the Central Coast. We need to be active as a church and as individual disciples in taking the message of the cross to our area because the Central Coast is the #2 "never-churched" region in America.

I want to share this statistic that I routinely share with you again, because I want you to be reminded of the spiritual needs of our city and the Central Coast. I want you to leave here each week and say, "*What a great Savior!*" and not necessarily, "*What a great sermon! Or, What a great service! Or, What a great song!*"

I want us to leave here each week and say, "*What a great Savior! What a great Savior Jesus is!*" and then take that good news and share it with our family, our neighbors, our co-workers, the baristas, the waiters, the mechanics, the doctors, etc that we encounter. I want us to be so overwhelmed with Jesus that we share Him with anyone that God brings into our own little world of influence.

So, here's the statistic that I want to share with you *so that* you'll share Jesus' love with others:

According to the *Barna Group*, the Central Coast is ranked #2 in the U.S. on the "never-churched" list- a list of cities where there are the highest number of people that have never ever been to church. In all of the cities in the U.S., the Central coast is ranked #2 on the "never been to church list." Here's the list:

1. West Palm Beach-Ft. Pierce, FL (17%)
- 2. Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-San Luis Obispo, CA (16%)**
3. New York, NY (15%)
4. Harlingen-Weslaco-Brownsville-McAllen, TX (15%)
5. Chico-Redding, CA (15%)

We are #2 on the list of cities (from Santa Barbara to San Luis) that have the highest number of people who have never been to church once! In all of America, we are the #2 city that is full of people who have never been to church once in their life! This should not be! There are more "never-churched" people here on the Central Coast than there are in New York!

16% of the people that live on the Central Coast have never been to church once. That is sobering. And that means that God has sovereignly placed you in your neighborhood, in your workplace, so that you can share Jesus with these people.

* INSERT BARNAL SLIDE

We are also ranked #9 on the "Top Post-Christian Cities in America." There's 8 spots up in the North East. There's 1 in the North West and then there's us on the Central Coast. We have a very unique opportunity to share Jesus with the 54% of our population that is post-Christian.

That means that over half of the people here have never been in church, they don't know the Bible, they don't know who Adam and Eve are, they think Jesus is a curse word, they are lost! And Jesus put you here so you could tell them the good news that God loves sinners.

And even though 16% of the Central Coast have never been to church, invite them anyway. You never know what might happen. They might agree to come with you. Easter is coming up in 6 weeks and it's a great opportunity to invite them to church.

So, as you leave today, say this: *"What a great Savior You are, Jesus! Now, open some doors for me to tell people about You."* This is what I want us to pray this week: *"Jesus, give me an opportunity to tell someone about you."* Let's pray that. And, when you go tell people about Jesus, remember that-

JESUS WILL NOT FORGET YOU THE THIRD WEEK OF FEBRUARY.

He will be with you as you tell people about Him this week. I wonder how we will see God work this week? How exciting! I wonder what wonderful, strange, mysterious, and un-guessable ways we will see the Spirit of God work in our lives this week? Maybe He will draw someone to faith in Jesus!

What kind of God are we dealing with here, Grace? The kind of God who welcomes sinners, who welcomes...*His enemies*. We are dealing with the Romans 5 kind of God:

Romans 5:8-10

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

We serve the God who pursues His enemies and loves them, forgives them, justifies them. We serve the God who says this to His enemies (quote from Chad Bird)-

Come, you pole-dancers and Sunday School Teachers and crazy old cat ladies, come to the feast!

Come, you snotty-nosed brats and dirty old men and abortionists, come to the feast!

Come, you Bible-thumping Baptists and smells-and-bells Anglicans and holier-than-thou Lutherans, come to the feast!

Come, you virgins and porn stars, you pious and predators, you straight-as-an-arrow and you LGBTQs, come to the feast!

It is finished.

The Lamb has been slain.

His blood has painted the wicked world white.

His table is laden with life.

And there's a place setting with your name written on it.

Come to the feast!

Have you slept with more people than you can remember? Come to the feast and be welcomed as a pure virgin in Jesus the righteous one.

Have you murdered and stolen and raped and devastated life after life along the way? Come to the feast and be welcomed as a saint by the Holy One of God.

Have you vomited up more meals than you've digested, cut yourself just to feel something real, starved yourself to skin and bones just to feel un-fat? Come to the feast and be welcomed as drop-dead gorgeous by the One who is Incarnate Love.

Have you faithfully prayed, fasted, done devotions, served in soup kitchens, tithed from your gross income, and memorized 1000 Bible verses? There's room at the table for you, too! Come to the feast and be welcomed by him who takes away your filthy righteousness and clothes you with his own.

Come to the tomb of Jesus and laugh at the ugly, deformed, twisted face of death.

Come to the throne of Jesus, let the Father hug you and kiss you and wipe your tears away.

Come to the feast where evil and good, wise and foolish, shameful and shaming are welcomed as citizens of the kingdom.

Let no one say, "I am unworthy," for Christ makes you worthy.

Let no one say, "I have sinned too much," for your sin is no longer your own.

*Let no one say, "I don't believe enough," for Christ has trusted perfectly in your stead.
Let no one say, "I have blasphemed," for Jesus has exchanged your curse for a blessing.*

*Everything is ready.
Let no one be left hungry.
Gather all and bring them in.*

Go to the highways and byways, bars and alleys, nursing homes and hospitals, seminaries and sex shops, and bring them to the feast. Let no one be left behind.

The world—the whole jacked-up, navel-gazing, sin-loving, evil-addicted world—has been set right by the God who died and rose again.

*All are forgiven.
All are covered.
All are welcome.*

Come, one and all, come to the feast!

"Jesus Has A Coffin For Every Empire And Emperor"

Genesis 14:1-16
Sermon Study Questions

1. Discuss what Ralph Davis said:

"Yahweh is Lord of the last day but also of every day. He will bring the consummation of his kingdom at last, but he will not forget you in the third week of September."

What are you facing this week? What are worried about today? What promise of God can you cling to?

2. Where do we see the providence of God in Genesis 14? How is god keeping His promise to Abram?

3. Discuss this thought from the sermon:

Genesis 14:13 is in the Bible to remind you of that wonderful, strange, mysterious, un-guessable way Yahweh has of ruling his world and sustaining his people, and his doing it, frequently, over, under, around, through, or in spite of the most common stuff of our lives or even the bias of our wills. And, then to think, "What might God do in my situation? How might God fix the mess I created? How might God redeem this circumstance? How will God turn this for good?"

How does the providence of God elicit excitement and anticipation in our lives?

4. READ Genesis 14:11 a5 discuss this thought from the sermon:

How are these 4 thug-kings described? They are the enemy. They are the enemy of the people of God. They have kidnapped Lot, one of God's people, therefore, they are the enemy. This is why Abram must deal with them. Understand this: God has enemies and He deals with them. We see this in Genesis 14. God has enemies. That might bother you. But, as Flannery O'Connor said, "The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it." Jesus is going to shake the heavens and the earth one day, like a snow globe. And when He returns in His final advent, He will tear down every rival kingdom. Genesis 14 reminds us that God is very much in control, and very much involved in the politics and affairs of the world.

5. Discuss these statistics about the Central Coast:

According to the *Barna Group*, the Central Coast is ranked #2 in the U.S. on the "never-churched" list- a list of cities where there are the highest number of people that have never ever been to church. In all of the cities in the U.S., the Central coast is ranked #2 on the "never been to church list." Here's the list:

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