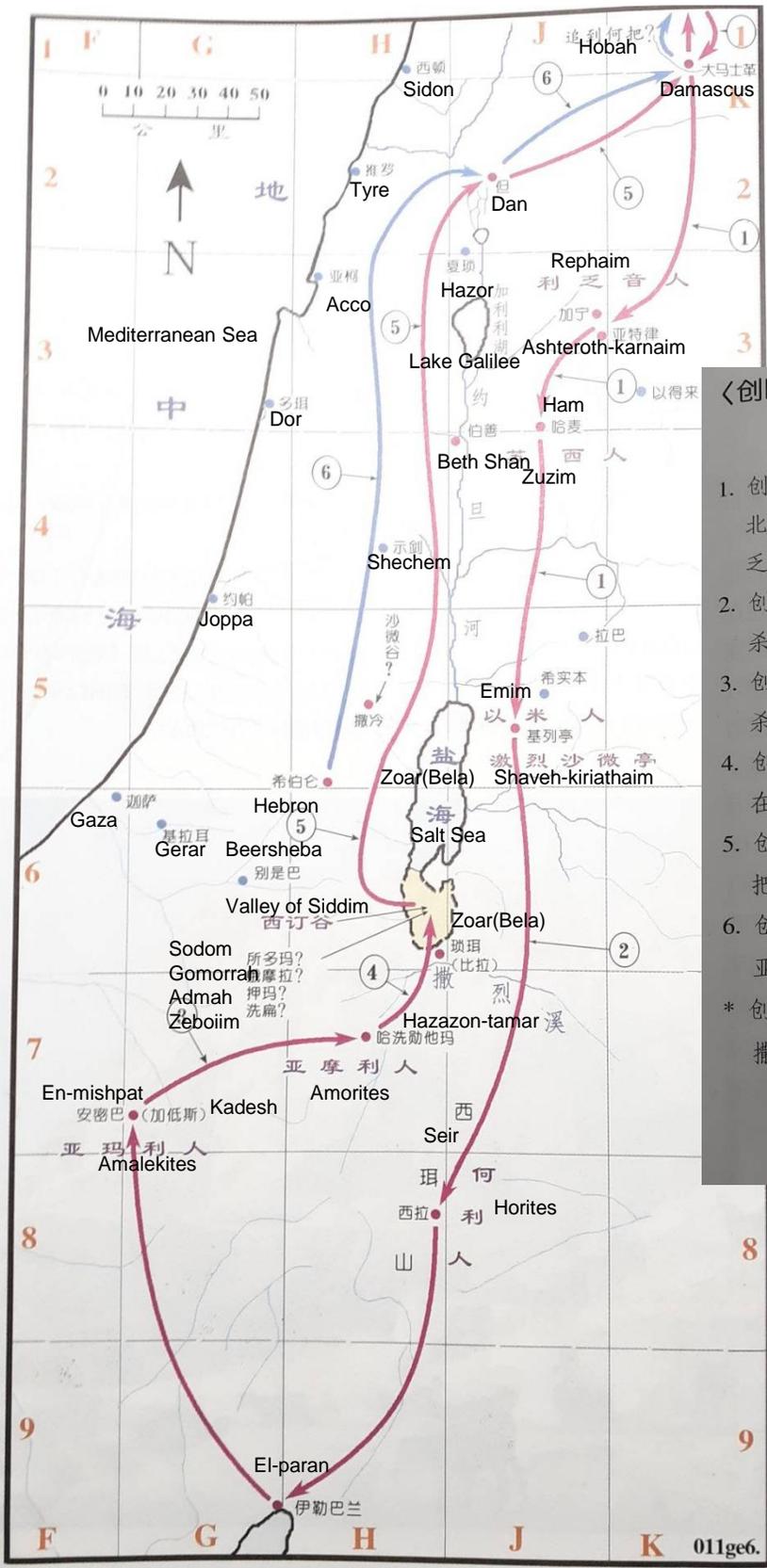


A summary of Genesis 14:1-16

- 1. Do we worship our future and our success, or do we worship God? (Genesis 14:1-12)?** Genesis 14 presents us with a unique account which some Bible readers may tend to regard as interesting but not very significant. However, when we read the Bible, and especially when we come to passages that seemingly have no significant bearing on our lives, it is good to ask the Lord questions, especially the question “why.” In this passage, we discover that verses 1-12 portray the first human war ever to be recorded in the Bible. The Bible records the first murder (of Abel by his brother Cain) in Genesis 4:8, and mentions in passing the murder of a man by Lamech minus the details in Genesis 4:23, and the subsequent death penalty for murder mandated by God much later in Genesis 9:6, but it is not till we come to Genesis 14 that we are introduced to a punitive war. Why was this war fought? Who were the participants? Who was the victor? How did it concern Abraham, and how does it concern us? We read that five kings (Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela or Zoar) served Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, no doubt paying him tribute, and then rebelled in the thirteenth year, precipitating an angry response by the enraged Chedorlaomer who gathered three other kings (Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar and Tidal king of Goiim) as his allies to quickly suppress the rebellion. If we look at the map, we will see that the territories of the four Gentile kings were located north of the good land, whereas the territories of the five Gentile kings were located in the south, still outside the good land (Canaan). En route, the rampaging armies of the four kings conquered the Rephaim (giants) in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim (Genesis 14:6) and the Horites in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the border of the wilderness (Gen 14:7), then turning back and coming to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh) and defeating all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hazazon-tamar. How could four kings defeat five kings? Why were they so strong? What does this all mean to us? Let us look at Genesis 11:1-2, which may shed some light: “Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.” In v.4, they built a city and a tower with its top in the heavens in order to make a name for themselves, lest they be dispersed over the face of the whole earth. In v.6, their handiwork prompted a reaction from God: “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.” What does Shinar represent? The first of the four kings was the king of Shinar. Shinar represents natural capability and ability, resulting in a name for oneself and fame. The inhabitants of Shinar in chapter 11 were unified (one) but for their own name and not for God. They were not involved in anything evil. Likewise the four kings in chapter 14 are not necessarily related to anything evil. For example, consider the great iconic enterprises that have affected the world globally. Giants such as Apple, Microsoft, Samsung, Mitsubishi, Honda and Airbus readily come to mind. Consider how many benefits have accrued from their operation: countless number of jobs, careers, impact on the economy, charitable donations to noble causes, relief funds to countries in economic distress or suffering from natural calamities. Consider all the CEO’s of these companies: highly educated men and women (in principle), with grand vision, actuated by philanthropic or humanistic motives, but without God and without knowledge of God. Who would not want their son or daughter to be a CEO, drawing a munificent salary, with hundreds or thousands of employees at their beck and call? These may be the “four kings” today in action, in the principle of the tree of knowledge of good (not evil), fighting against the five kings who represent the sinful aspect of life (Sodom and Gomorrah and Amalek, representing the sinful flesh, and Amalek, representing the natural flesh). This is a picture of who we may be, seeking something good for our lives or the lives of our children and grandchildren, such as straight A’s, a high paying job, a highly respected name, so we can bask in the man-made glory that may ensue. In a sense, the battle that raged more than 5000 years ago between the four kings and the five kings is still raging within each one of us today. We may be noble “humanists,” admired by everyone, but worshipping the goals and objectives that we have set before us without worshipping God. We surely want to eschew gambling, drugs, violence, theft and sexual misconduct, for example, represented by the five kings. Typically, in our soul, the four kings defeat the five kings, leaving us devoid of God and His purpose and leading. It eventually takes Abraham and his service team to come and defeat the four kings in us, to bring us back to the true worship of God, represented by the altar and the calling upon the name of the Lord, as we will see in the next point.
- 2. Do we have a service team in the church life in order to walk through the land to defeat “Shinar” (13:14;14:14-16)?** It is important to point out that the four kings, in engaging in battle with the five kings, did not invade the land of Canaan, that is, the land that God had promised Abraham, but circumvented it. This indicates that God was in control. How can the four kings in us (see point 1 above) be defeated in us? We need Abraham, but not just Abraham individually, but Abraham and his service team to walk through the land in order to “pursue” them and bring us back to the Christ in us and to the Christ in the church life, lived out through the brothers and sisters. In 13:14, God asked Abraham not to use his eyes but to lift up his eyes. However, this was said not just to Abraham but also to those whom he had trained and who had been born in his house (14:14). This indicates that Abraham had a strong, healthy church life. Do we? It is not just a matter of whether we come to the church gatherings. Many of us may like to come Lord’s day morning. We enjoy the singing, the testimonies, the sweet fellowship. We like to socialize with our “friends” or those whom we know well. Yet we are still occupied by “Shinar,” by the four kings. The intense desire for straight A’s and the ideal job is in our blood, and hard as we try, it is impossible to eradicate it. How can the “Abraham” in us defeat the “Shinar” in us? God uses “war,” just as he used war in Abraham’s time. Abraham had a team. He was not alone. He was not an individual giant of faith. He had a church life, a healthy service team that was one with the Lord, a service team that built an altar and called upon the name of the Lord. Do we see this? Too often, we only see Abraham. Abraham did this and Abraham did that. Often, we end up saying, “Oh well, that was Abraham. I can never be like Abraham anyway, so what’s the use of trying?” That is why we need

spiritual companions, spiritual children. Alone, we will always be defeated by the four kings. However, the Christ in the church life, that is, the Christ in the brothers and sisters will defeat the four kings in us. Do we want to be a CEO? There is nothing wrong with being a CEO. But where is God? We may be saved. But we may die spiritually, or we may have very little growth of life, like Lot. Eventually, Lot was useless, even though he was righteous and good. Do we have a service team with whom we can lift up our eyes, walk through the good land, consecrate ourselves (build an altar) and be one with the Lord (call upon the name of the Lord). Do we have straight A's? Wonderful. Are we sending out resumes to find a job? We must. Do we want our children to get the best education? Absolutely. But can we tell the Lord, "Lord, I am not for these things. I want to consecrate myself to You and depend upon you. Nothing that I have is because of my natural capabilities or intelligence. I depend on You, and I want to put You first."

- 3. Abraham's church life was much, much stronger than the church life in Montreal (Genesis 14:14).** Often it is not easy to apply passages in the Old Testament to our current church life situation. It may be easier to apply Old Testament stories to our individual lives. However, in chapter 14, we see an example of a church life that was extremely healthy, demonstrated by a service team of spiritual companions. In a previous summary, we compared Abraham's service team to Lot's service team, the former consisting of spiritual companions and the latter consisting of colleagues or business partners, eventually resulting in their defeat and captivity. However, Genesis 14:14 not only describes the service team in action, but also reveals to us the strength (or number) of the team: 318. This is not a small number. Are there that many in Montreal? Hardly. Moreover, these are not merely Sunday-goers, but committed believers with vision, purpose and consecration, trained, in oneness with the Lord and with one another, not only in service but undoubtedly in prayer. In other words, these were pillars raised up in Abraham's house, that is, his spiritual children. Are there 318 in Montreal? For example, if we look at the data, 64 saints (the current service team in Montreal) attended the corporate Chinese and English/French prayer gatherings this week, and 54 the previous week. This may indicate that Abraham's church life was a hundred fold stronger than Montreal's, and possibly more, much as we may not like to admit it. This is not to condemn us, but to encourage us to pursue companions, to read the Bible with saints, to pray for people, to preach the gospel, so we may have a service team, or enlarge our service team, in order to raise up more pillars.
- 4. It is very difficult to lead the church, but God is in control to lead the church.(Genesis 14:13).** How could Abraham walk through the land with his service team? God was in control. It needed an escapee from the captives that the four kings had carried off to come to Abraham to give him the news. We do not know who this person was, but we do know that he must have either walked or run 50 kilometers, according to the map. However, we do know that Abraham was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner, who were allies or confederates of Abram, no doubt because Abraham had made a covenant with them. This is the first instance in the Bible of a man making a covenant with another man or men. Eventually, Jesus, in the New Testament, would also make a covenant with Gentiles, for example with the Samaritan woman in John 4. Abraham was one with the three Amorites, and they were one with Abraham. Upon hearing the news of his nephew's captivity, Abraham led the three Amorites with his service team to defeat the four kings. These three Amorites became part of his service team. This shows Abraham's wisdom based upon the Lord's sovereignty and leading. God was in control, arranging everything and leading Abraham to exercise his wisdom, first to make a covenant with the three men, then to include them in his service team, then to lead them to battle, and then, after the victory had been won, to claim the share of what Aner, Eshcol and Mamre had eaten. Interestingly, Abraham refused to take anything for himself (we will cover this point in the next summary), but he did not speak for the three Amorites who accompanied him, ensuring that they obtained what they had deserved. How does this apply to us? It is very difficult to lead the church. Satan is always trying to destroy the growth of life in the saints. Yet God is in control. At least one man did not die, and God sent him at least 50 kilometers to Hebron, where Abraham was living. Why would Abraham be living in Hebron at that particular moment? Why could he not be living somewhere else? God was in control, to grant Abraham the wisdom to lead his service team so they could grow and explore the land. .
- 5. God is full of wisdom. Do we experience His wisdom (Genesis 14:14-15)?** Abraham divided his forces by night, and pursued the four kings north of Damascus (v.15). This was the wisdom of God. He and his team drove the enemy away from the good land. This also was the wisdom of God. Do we experience the Lord's wisdom? For example, there is a brother who only worked 40 hours a week, and used holidays to drive young people to conferences. Another brother, in his living, honored God in the choices he made for Christ and the church life, in relation with his children and their education and living, and God honored that. Both brothers have experienced the Lord's wisdom in many decisions which were not easy. Abraham's service team probably consisted mainly of herdsmen. They were not CEO's of big companies. Should we despise CEO's? Absolutely not. Rather, we should honor them. But we should not envy them. Several of Jesus' disciples were fishermen. We may tend to despise those who engage in a profession that we feel is lowly or not that "glorious." We should never underestimate them. Those fishermen were blessed by God. They experienced God's wisdom. They knew God and honored God and cared for His testimony. God's testimony was more important than their profession. They grew in the divine life to the extent where they were willing to "listen to God rather than man" (Acts 4:19). Is our career important, or is the Lord more important? None of us can dare say that we put Christ first. We are all sinners. But we can experience more and more the wisdom of God as we grow in life, not just individually but with our spiritual companions and service team.



The northern four kings attack the southern five kings
at ~2080 BC
Routes 1 - 6 with verses in Genesis 14

〈创图六〉 北方四王攻打南方五王
(2080BC 前后)

1. 创 14:1~4 Genesis
北方四王攻打南方五王，在南征的途中杀败了利乏音人和苏西人。
 2. 创 14:6 Genesis
杀败了以米人和何利人。
 3. 创 14:7 Genesis
杀败了亚玛力人和亚摩利人。
 4. 创 14:8 Genesis
在西订谷击败南方五王。
 5. 创 14:11~12 Genesis
把五个城中的财物和罗得一家都掳掠了去。
 6. 创 14:13~16 Genesis
亚伯兰追击北方四王，将罗得救回。
- * 创 14:17~24 Genesis
撒冷王麦基洗德为亚伯兰祝福。