

Introducing Melchizedek

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning everybody and a happy new year to you. Here we are in January 2021. Welcome! to Calvary Church here in Brighton on the south coast of England. Let me just say my usual introduction! as I welcome everybody, whether you're a regular or a new visitor, this is Calvary Church in Brighton, we're a church of about 70 to 80 people meeting on a Sunday morning back in the old times as they used to be and we're based on the south coast of England, south of London. So I welcome you.

Here we are again on YouTube. We are in the next lockdown which seems like a hard blow. Things seem rather tough with the corona situation here in the UK and here in the south east. So we look to the Lord to be our helper. In the current difficulties I think we're going to be meeting like this for a little while to come. Well, my name is Philip Wells and I work for the church here as the pastor elder and I'm going to be leading this morning and we're going to be looking at further on in the book of Hebrews, Letter to the Hebrews, which is one of the letters in the New Testament of the Bible and it has some very interesting things to say about what it is to be a Christian and what Jesus does and how important he is and it relates it to the Old Testament, the Hebrew scriptures. Christians call it the Old Testament, the Hebrew scriptures and that's what we're going to be looking at. We've been looking at this for a little while and as God helps us we'll continue to do so. So let's put the plan up on the screen. There it is. That's what we're going to be doing and in a moment we'll sing a song and what we're going to sing is from the Psalms, Psalm 46. If you have a book, if you happen to have the praise book, it would be Psalm 46 version B. God is our strength and refuge. And let me just read some of the words of this psalm. I've chosen it because I think it's appropriate. It talks about God's people under a time of stress, a time of uncertainty and indeed a degree of threat and perhaps that's a little bit how we feel at the moment. So let's listen to this psalm, Psalm 46 for the director of music of the sons of Korah according to Alamo and nobody knows

I think what that means but it says it according to Alamo a song. God is our refuge and strength and ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea. Though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the most high dwells. God is within her. She will not fall. God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall. He lifts his voice. The earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. So those are the first few words of Psalm 46 and we'll sing that now. We'll have it sung to us and after that we'll pray. So let's have the song.

God is our strength and refuge, our present help in trouble. And we therefore will not fear, though the earth should change.

though mountains shake and tremble. Though swirling floods are raging. God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore.

[4 : 57] God is in the midst of her. She shall not be moved.

God's help is swiftly given. Thrown vanish at His presence. God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore.

God is with us evermore. Come see the works of a maker. Learn of His deeds all-powerful. Wars will cease across the world when He shatters the spirit.

Be still and know His deeds all-powerful. Be still and know your Creator. Uplift Him in the nations. God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore.

God is with us evermore. Well, we've sung the song and let's now come to pray to God. We'll say as we've become accustomed to doing together the Lord's Prayer, which is up on the screen behind my head.

[6 : 54] Let's pray. We do come as worshippers this morning. We say that you are great and greatly to be praised.

God is our refuge and strength. You are an ever-present help in trouble. We want to lift our hearts to you in worship and adoration.

And to say in our souls and with every capacity that we have, our God is great and greatly to be praised.

You are worthy. You are majestic. You are glorious. You are wise. You are compassionate. You are the God of all strength and the God of all comfort.

And we pray that these days we may know you to be this God of strength who gives strength to his people. And a God of comfort who gives comfort to his people.

[7 : 57] And a God even of joy. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God and imparts something of your joy to your people. Lord, we confess to you that we are in a condition of stress.

Some of us are very, very pushed. The time and the confusion of the last few days and weeks has meant that we feel the pressure.

We ask you to show, O Lord, that you are the God of steadfast love who knows how to sustain your people under pressure. We pray, Lord, that you will be at work very really and deeply in our hearts. Some of us, too, have been through difficulties, difficult times. And we pray that you would sustain those who are going through deep waters.

And please be with them. See them through. Bring them through to the other side. And we pray that you would do that in that sense for all of us and as a church.

[9 : 04] Keep us together. Keep us looking to you. And we pray that you will be our help, as the psalm says. We also pray that you will advance your kingdom.

You've taught us to pray, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In a moment, we're going to pray that. But we ask you to advance your kingdom. We can see that the kingdoms of earth have been in chaos and in confusion and are behind the curve in many cases. But we ask, Lord, that your kingdom would not be behind the curve. But that your kingdom would advance and progress. We pray that those of you who are in Christ would be more like Christ.

We pray, Lord, that those who are yet to become in Christ would become in Christ. And we pray, Lord, for the kingdom of Christ to extend to further things, to institutions and attitudes and places where kingdom has not yet come.

May your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. So as we pray, we call upon you to do your good work.

[10 : 25] We call upon you to be changing us. We call upon you to be at work within your people. We call upon you to do such things as will bring great glory to your name, because that's what you deserve.

And as we are in this new year, please, as the months unfold, will you do wonders? Will you bring strength? Will you show that you are a God who answers prayer?

And we pray that as the months go by, the things of your kingdom might be found stronger and more glorious than they might seem to be at present.

So hear our prayers in all these things. For Jesus' sake. Amen. And let's say together the Lord's Prayer. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

[11 : 38] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever.

Amen. We're going to continue by thinking a little bit about this matter of forgiveness. It seems to me to be such an important matter. And although it's the sort of bread or butter of the Christian life, it's well worth revisiting.

The matter of forgiveness affects our whole, well it begins with our relationship with God. There is forgiveness with you that you may be feared.

You know, respected, revered, deeply, deeply affected. And that attitude of forgiveness works out into our relationships.

In a very, very practical way. Our relationships at home. Relationships with our family. Relationships between husband and wife. Relationships in the workplace.

[12 : 39] And in the place of study. You name it. It just colours everything. So, I wanted to say a few things in these next few weeks about forgiveness. And, well, here's one place to start.

I want thoughts on forgiveness. This is my first place. That's perhaps not the... Well, you could start in many places, but I'm going to start here.

When you grant forgiveness, what are you doing? Somebody says, I'm sorry. It's not a very good way of asking for forgiveness.

But I suppose somebody says that. And you say, I forgive you. What actually is happening there? And the point I'm just trying to make here is that when you grant forgiveness, you relinquish the right to use that offence as a weapon.

I'll just say that again because it's so important. When you grant forgiveness... So, forgiveness is something you give. It's a gift. It's not forced.

[13 : 45] It's a free gift. When you grant forgiveness, if you decide to do that, what are you doing? You're relinquishing the right to use that offence as a weapon.

And let me just give you a very simple example. So, somebody says, Oh, you rotten thing. You forgot to bring me chocolates on my birthday.

Okay, we can see a little situation developing here. So, that's the orange person. And whatever colour that is, let's imagine that's blue.

And the blue person says, Ah! Hmm. So, instead of saying, I'm sorry, or I was in the wrong, they decide to make a fight of it. And they say, Well, you forgot to bring me chocolates on my birthday.

Okay, so we've got a fight going on. So, the blue person says, You forgot to bring me chocolates on my birthday. And the orange person says, Yeah, but I was wrong.

[14 : 49] I asked you to forgive me for that. And you said you did. You know, so looking back, I was wrong. I asked for forgiveness. And you said you forgave me.

Now, what's going on here? You see, if you decide to forgive someone, and it's a big thing to forgive someone. It's not a cheap, easy, quick thing.

If you forgive someone, you give up. That's what I mean by relinquish. You give up the right to use that offence as a weapon against the other person to win an argument.

So, the blue person is wrong to bring this into the argument. The blue person forgave the orange person.

And if they've forgiven them, they should not bring that up again in an argument to win a point as a weapon. That is off the table.

[15 : 49] And it's very important in our relationships that we understand that. So, if you mean to use something as a weapon against somebody, and you're going to hold it against them, and you're going to remind them of it, and you're going to remind yourself of it, and you're going to say, well, they did so and so to me.

If you're going to say that, then you're not forgiving. And if you forgive, you give up the right to say those things. And the reason I say it's important is that this is how God forgives.

We come to God and we ask him to forgive us. And this is an incredible thing. He does. And it isn't cheap, and it isn't easy, but he is a God who forgives sinners who come to him and say they were wrong.

And when he forgives, he lays down the right to use that offence as a weapon against us.

So when we have an argument with God, he doesn't say, ah, but I remember that you did so and so. But you forgave me. And God says, yes, I did.

[17 : 05] And I've completely forgotten what it was that we were talking about. As far as the East is from the West, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. This is a wonderful encouragement for us, isn't it?

He doesn't hold our sins against us. He doesn't keep them sort of in a list that he's going to bring up again later. If they're forgiven, it's forgotten and gone, not used as a weapon against us.

And that's great. And in our relationships, we shouldn't use forgiven offences as a weapon against other people. Well, I hope that makes sense.

And I think it's really important, worth thinking about. And on the subject of forgiveness, it did cost God a lot. Forgiveness is costly.

And it cost God his own son. He did not spare his own son, but freely gave him up for us all so that we could be forgiven, that we would have redemption, that is the forgiveness of sins.

Scriptures From what we would say the Old Testament In particular a psalm Psalm 110 Which is a rather remarkable psalm Written by David About his Lord A person that he sees prophetically in the future Who is a king and a priest In the style of Melchizedek This psalm happens to be quite crucial in this

[26 : 12] I don't want us to get tired of singing it But we will need to keep coming back to this In the next few weeks But let's sing it just now This is Psalm 110 The Lord said to my Lord The Lord said to my Lord Sit here at my right hand Until your foes before you fall And my cup of heart From Zion's throne He gave you power To rule the land And when the day of battle comes

Your troops will fight And you in holy majesty From day's first light With youth anointed As with dew Will rise In might The Lord himself Has sworn and done His oath Can shape That you forever In his name Should Christ Would take Succeeding in The line of peace Melchizedek O Christ Beside your Father Now you take your seat Till all the powers of earth Like crushed beneath your feet Renown and glory Crown your head Your word Complete We're going to have another reading now We've had that Psalm 110 Mentioning Melchizedek And we're going to go back And go right back to square one And find out who this chap is Melchizedek He comes in the story of Abraham In Genesis chapter 14 And here is the reading About Abraham Who has become established Over there And there are kings

That live in the surrounding areas And there are other kings That come from a long long way away In the far far east And this is a story about a clash Between those kings And in which Melchizedek Is one of the people In the story So thanks again Rosemary And particular thanks Because she's got some really difficult names To read out So well done Thank you Rosemary For this reading Genesis chapter 14 At this time Amraphel king of Shinar Ariok king of Elessar Kedoleoma king of Elam And Tidal king of Goyim Went to war against Berah king of Sodom Bersha king of Gomorrah Shinab king of Admar Shemiba king of Zeboim And the king of Bilah That is Zor All these latter kings Joined forces In the valley of Sidim The Salt Sea For twelve years They had been subject To Kedoleoma But in the thirteenth year They rebelled In the fourteenth year Kedoleoma and the kings Allied with him Went out And defeated The Rethaites In Ashtaroth Carnaim The Zuzites In Ham The Emites In Shaveth Kiriathayim And the Horites In the hill country Of Seir As far as El Paran Near the desert Then they turned back And went to En Mishpat That is Kedesh And they conquered The whole territory Of the Amalekites As well as the Amorites Who were living In Hazazon Tamar Then the king of Sodom The king of Gomorrah The king of Admar The king of Zeboim And the king of Bela That is Zor Marched out And drew up Their battle lines In the valley of Sidim Against Kedoleoma King of Elam Tidal King of Goyim Amrathel King of Shinar

[31 : 29] And Ariok King of Elessar Four kings Against five Now the valley of Sidim Was full of tar pits And when the kings Of Sodom and Gomorrah Fled Some of the men Fell into them And the rest Fled to the hills The four kings Seized all the goods Of Sodom and Gomorrah And all their food Then they went away They also carried off Abram's nephew Lot And his possessions Since he was living In Sodom One who had escaped Came and reported this To Abram the Hebrew Now Abram was living Near the great trees Of Mamre the Amorite A brother of Eshcol And Anna All of whom Were allied With Abram When Abram heard That his relative Had been taken captive He called out The 318 trained men Born in his household And went in pursuit

As far as Dan During the night Abram divided his men To attack them And he routed them Pursuing them As far as Hobar North of Damascus He recovered All the goods And brought back His relative Lot And his possessions Together with the women And the other people After Abram returned From defeating Codolioma And the kings Allied with him The king of Sodom Came out to meet him In the valley of Shaveh That is the king's valley Then Melchizedek King of Salem Brought out bread And wine He was priest Of God Most High And he blessed Abram Saying Blessed be Abram By God Most High Creator of heaven And earth And blessed Be God Most High Who delivered Your enemies Into your hand Then Abram Gave him A tenth Of everything The king of Sodom Said to Abram Give me the people And keep the goods For yourself But Abram Said to the king Of Sodom I have raised My hand To the Lord God Most High Creator of heaven And earth And have taken An oath That I will accept Nothing belonging To you Not even a thread Or the thong Of a sandal So that you will Never be able To say I made Abram Rich I will accept Nothing but What my men Have eaten And the share That belongs To the men Who went with me To Anna Eshcol And Mamre Let them have Their share This is the word Of the Lord So we've Read that Chapter And we're now Going to think About it So let's pray As we do Lord There's nothing We need more Than

to be In touch With you To have Your touch Upon our Lives Getting rid Of sin And wrong Thinking And wrong Actions And wrong Feelings But putting Us right And straight And recalibrating Us We so much Need this So as we Come to your Word Please help Speak And hear it Alike So that That wonderful Work Of the Holy Spirit Would be Done We trust The promises That are made To us That those Who meditate In your Word Will be like Trees Planted By streams Of water Whose leaf Does not Wither But who Bears fruit In due season So may that Be true Of each Of us Amen Okay we're Going to Look then Into Genesis Chapter 14 And my Introduction Is to Bring us The idea Of Mysterious Trails And mysterious Keys That lead To something You know A key To life

A mysterious Secret That has The key To something Those sorts Of stories That entice Us And fascinate Us It's the same Sort of thing As the Indiana Jones Trilogy Isn't it The key To a treasure That leads To something Wonderful One of them Has the Keys In his Father's Little book And he Follows the Trail And gets All the way To Well I won't Spoil it For you If this Is your Taste The da Vinci Code I think I've read That a long Time ago Doesn't it Lead to Venice And then Lead on To something Quite Fantastical That might Not be Your cup Of tea I remember Watching The Sinbad Animations Back in the Day when There wasn't Such a Thing as Computer Animation And Sinbad Sought for The fountain Of eternal Youth And I Think on The island Of Zanubu But he Had to Follow the Trail To get To the Treasure And is

[36 : 34] There a Trail Has God Put a Trail In this World That if We follow It We get To eternal Life And I Think the Answer is Yes He has Put the Trail If we Follow it We get Eternal Life But the Answer Isn't Some Mysterious Fountain It's the Person It's a Person And in The story That we're Going to Look at Today We're Going to Follow Or at Least We're Going to Begin to Follow that Trail And we'll Start off With the Mysterious Key That sets The whole Thing going Follow the Trail And it Will lead To our Destination We won't Get all The way To the Destination Today But we'll Start Following The Trail Part of The code For this Is M M for Melchizedek Now who Is Melchizedek That's what We're Going to Find out And we Are actually Studying the Letters of The Hebrews You might Not have Realised it But Hebrews Sees Melchizedek

As the Key To Understanding Jesus And there's A picture Of Melchizedek You can Recognise him Straight away No doubt And if We've Understood Jesus We Understand Salvation We Understand Salvation In its Ultimate Destination In the World To come And as The writers Of the Hebrews Would like To tell Us There's A particular Significance Of Melchizedek The priest Who Points us To Jesus Who gives us Help from Heaven At this Very Moment At our Point of Need As we Make this Perilous Journey Across The desert Where we Have to Stick to The path If you Recall That So we're Going to Look Today At Melchizedek This figure With this Strange Perhaps Off-putting Name And the way We're going To do it This morning Is to look At the Original Story Back in Genesis Chapter 14 So you

Might like To get That open While you're Finding That I will Say Genesis Means Beginning Like the Genesis Of Daleks And it's A book Of beginnings There are All sorts Of things In this Book That sort Of start Something Off Which is Echoed Later On Perhaps In a Fuller Way Or in A deeper Way And we'll See that As we Go through This Just now I'm Going to Say Three Sections If you'd Like to Follow Where we're Going I hope That will Keep us All awake Number One The Geography Of Faith Number Two The Victory Of Deliverance And number Three The Mystery Of Reception I tried To get Three Y's In there Geography Of Faith Victory Of Deliverance Mystery Of Reception And maybe That will Be a Suitable Peg To hang It on You can Go through It Afterwards And say What were Those Three Things That had A Y In Them So Let's Look First of All Then We're Looking at Melchizedek We'll Look at The Geography Of Faith Now I should Introduce You To The Important Person In This Chapter One Of The Important People Which is Abraham He He Hasn't Got The Name Abraham At This Point In The Story He's Called Abram But He Is Already The Key Figure Of God's Hope For The World He Is The Key Figure Of God's Hope For The World There's Abram He's In A Particular Posture Of Greeting Somebody And That Comes Up Later! To A Great Nation And I Will Bless You I Will Make Your Name Great And You Will Be A Blessing I Will Bless Those Who Bless You And Whoever Curses You Or Despises You I Will Curse And All The Peoples On Earth Will Be Blessed Through You So You Get The Idea There's A Blessing Attached To Abraham And How People Respond To Him Sort Of Rebounds Back All People Will Be Blessed Through You And As A Further Feature Of Abraham's Significance There Is The Promise Of Land Which For Example Is In Chapter 13 Verse 15 All The Land You See I Will Give

To You And Your Offspring Forever So There's A Promise Of Land It's A Long Term Promise Of Land I've Put There The Purpose Of The Spearhead Of Land Meaning To Say Just [41 : 16] Finish With Land That's The Starting Point And God's Purposes Have In Fact Inheriting The Whole World Or Indeed The Whole Cosmos But It Starts Off With Land The Spearhead Then I'm Saying Is Not A Terminus That's Not What It All Boils Down To But It's The Beginning And The Agenda Actually Goes On From There Much Wider So I Said It The Mediterranean With Cyprus There And The Below That The River Nile Where Egypt Is And Over On The Right Hand Side The Two Rivers The Tigris And The Euphrates And Along There The Great Cities Which Are Yet To Emerge Of Babylon And Nineveh The Capitals Of Babylon And Assyria Great Powers That Are Going To Be A Huge Part Of Israel's

Future But At The Moment We've Just Got That Bare Map And We Have In The Story Four Kings Chapter 14 Verse One Am Raphael King Of Shinar Ariok King Of El Asar Kedaleama King Of Elam And Tidal King Of Goyim And They Go To War And They Are Four Kings From The Distant And Threatening East So Where The Origin Of That Arrow Is That's Where They Come From And Where The Head Of Arrow Is That's Where They're Headed To And Where The Head Of The Arrow Is That's Where The Promised Land The Land Promised To Abraham Actually Is So Shinar Where Am Raphael Comes From Is Linked To Babylon And El Asar Linked To Assyria Roughly Speaking And The Other Two Likewise They're From The Distant And Threatening East And More Threats Are Going To Come From This Beginning In The Course Of Israel's History So There's The Four Kings And They No I'm Sorry The Just Before We Leave The Geography Let Me Say That The Promised Land Is On A Vital Trade!

Route Between! The Powerful Eastern Nations And Egypt Which Is Going To Be Powerful To The West So There's That Arrow There's The Trade Route It Goes Smack Bang Through The Middle Of The Promised Land And The Promised Land Is Forever Sandwiched Between These Huge Power Blocks Of Egypt And Babylon Stroke Assyria And That's Where God Put The Promised Land And You Might Say If I Was Going To Put A Promised Land I Put It Somewhere A Lot Safer And A Lot More Secluded So There Wouldn't Be So Many Problems And Of Course The Location Of The Promised Land Sets It Up For Issues That Would Test Israel Throughout Her History And These Issues Begin Here Israel Was Constantly Under The Temptation And Pressure To Walk By Power Facing The Power Of The East And The West Sandwiched As They Are In The Middle With Power Or Compromise Or Giving

In And It's So The Geography Of It Constantly Put Israel In The Position Of Having To Trust The Lord Trust In His Mighty Power Rather Than Her Own Native Power And It Seems To Me That There's A Lesson In That There's A Lesson In The Geography Of Faith Because They Would Say Why Did You Put The Promised Land There That's A Big Mistake Lord We Dare Say Such A Thing But We Might Be Saying Why Have You Sent This Virus Why Have You Put Me In This Country Where The Statistics Are What They Are Why Have You Put Me In This Place At This Time That Must Be A Mistake And It Isn't A Mistake But It Is A Call For Faith And Just As Israel Had To Trust The Lord That He Knew What He Was Doing He Put Them In The Right Place At The Right Time So Too We

[45 : 37] Have To Walk By Faith If You Look At The Map If You Walk By Sight If You Just Use Your Eyes You Miss The Full Story We Have To Walk By Faith And Faith Is An Ear Thing Rather Than An Eye Thing It's Listening To What God Has Said And Heeding It And Living As If It's True Living On The Basis Of It And That's How We Are To Live In This World Just The Same As Abraham Had And Just The Same As The Ancient Israelites Had To Do The Geography Is A Geography Of Faith And I Want To Encourage Us Brothers And Sisters As I Hope You Encourage Me Not To Look At Things And Get Intimidated But To Hear What God Is Saying In His And Not By Sight So Number One Was The Geography Of Faith So Let's Follow On Here We've Got These Four

Kings And There Are Five Local Kings They're In Verse Two Berah King Of Sodom Bersha King Of Gomorrah Shinab King Of Adma Shem Mem Ber King Of Zeboim And The King Of Bela That Is Zoar And All These Latter Kings Joined Forces In The Valley Of Sidim The Salt Sea So The Four Kings Oppress The Five Local Kings They've Got Names Like Ber And Berah And I'm Just Going to Come Back Later And Say That These Ra Shah Syllables Are Picking On The Hebrew Word For Evil So It's King Evil Or King McEvil Or Something Like That We might Say In English So The Four Kings Oppressed The Five Local Kings And For Twelve Years They Had Been Subject To

Kedilema But In The Thirteenth Year They Rebelled And In The Fourteenth Year Kedilema The Kings Allied With Him Went Out And Defeated The Rephaites Ashteroth Can Aem Lots Of Other Names They Defeated Lots Of People And In The End They Line Up Against The Five Kings That We've Had Mentioned To Us Verse Eight The King Of Sodom King Of Gomorrah The King Of Adma The King Of Zebo The King Of Bela That Is Soar Marched Out And Dropped Their Battle Lines In The Valley Of Sidim Against Kedilema King Of Edam Tidal King Of Goyim Amraphel King Of Sheena Ariok King Of Elassar Four Kings Against Five So There's The Four Kings Who Have Tried To Break The Five Kings Have Tried To Break Loose From The Oppression Of The Four Kings The Four Kings Come Battle And In This Area There Are Tar Pits And It Just Tells Us About The Geographic Features Here And People Fall Into The Tar Pits During The Battle And What Happens Is That The Four Kings The Eastern Kings The Powerful Eastern Kings Win And They Seize All The Goods Of Sodom And Gomorrah And All Their Food And They Went Away! And They Carried Off Abraham's Nephew Lot And His Goods Possessions Since He Was Living In Sodom So Lot Is Abraham's Nephew He Was Living In Sodom Which As We'll See Was An Evil Place Not A Good Idea To Live There And The Four Kings Beat The Five Kings And Take Their Goods This Word Goods Crops Up Quite A Bit And Off They Go And I Got An Arrow Saying Off They Go Back Home And We're Talking In This Second Section About The Victory Of Deliverance Now How Is This A Victory Of Deliverance Now In Verse 13 Says One Who Escaped Came And Reported This To Abraham The Hebrew Is To He's told he's a Hebrew. I don't know if that's a new sort of word to use.

[49 : 51] Maybe this has been copied and pasted from somewhere else. You know, the Zeboim Times or something. So it was reported to Abram the Hebrew.

Now, Abram was living near the great trees of Marmora, the Amorite, a brother of Eshcol and Anah, all of whom were allied with Abram. So there is a brother thing going on there.

And this allied camouflages the word covenant. So these guys had covenanted with Abram, a very wise thing to do. Abram was at the centre of God's purposes.

And if they can get into a covenant with Abram, that is a very strong and secure place to be. So they've wisely made a covenant. And yes, a wise and safe place to be linked up as it really is with God's promise.

And I just stopped to say covenant is a great place to be if you're in the covenant with the right person. And the right person to be in covenant with is Jesus. This is my blood of the new covenant, said Jesus, at the time of the Last Supper.

[51 : 05] A great place to be under the promises, lined up with the blessings and promises of God by being in covenant with the key person.

But we move on. Verse 14. So Abraham hears about his brother and he says, well, he's my brother. I've got to help. And he calls out his trained men and they do a long and quick pursuit to the north. I'm suspecting that this number means they can travel very light and very fast and presumably very skillfully.

So Dan is up in the far north and off they go, overtaking the kings with their booty, their possession. And they mount a successful attack.

Verse 15. During the night day, Abraham divided his men or perhaps sent his men or instructed his men to attack them. And he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobart, north of Damascus.

[52 : 21] So there's lots of action going on, capturing and harrying the fleeing troops. And he recovered all the goods. Notice that word again. And brought back his relative lot and his goods or possessions together with the women and the other people.

So it's a successful attack. And he comes all the way back, returning with goods. The word turn crops up quite a bit. And they return with goods and his brother lot and the women and the people. Am I saying all that right? And possessions. Have I got that? Yes. Okay. So that's the victory of deliverance. Now we notice that Abraham went to save his brother.

Again, there's a sort of linkage here. It doesn't use the word covenant this time, but it's family. And again, we have this idea of being linked up with Abraham. Here is a generous, loyal love that Abraham shows.

He's my brother. I need to go and bail him out. He's been a bit stupid living over there in Sodom. But I'm going to bail him out anyway. At risk to myself.

[53 : 29] And off he goes. He won't stand by and let his brother perish. That's what a friend is, isn't it? Somebody who comes and helps you at need. He goes off at risk, endangered himself to save his brother.

And I can't help but say that isn't that exactly what Jesus has done? Didn't he say, look with pity on us? And we weren't even his family, were we? And he said, I'm going to save that lot. It'll cost. And it's a really, what is it, a desperate venture, a brave venture. And he came from heaven to save us.

So I think we should be remarkably grateful for his generosity and courage and mercy. Well, this is what Abraham did. And he wins a remarkable victory.

A little bit, and it seems to me a little bit like Gideon. You know, the victory that he won over Midianites. Not a lot of people. But by God's power and wisdom and grace, those few people could win a remarkable victory.

[54 : 34] And the glory went to God. That's what happened in Gideon, wasn't it? That God sent home extra soldiers in case they think it was their own power and strength. And perhaps we feel a little bit like that as well.

Verse 20 is said, God most high delivered your enemies into your hand. God is a God of deliverance.

And he is the one who wins the victory. I'm just going to reflect that God gives the victory in all sorts of ways. But the victory of the cross is a particular victory, isn't it?

It is a single-handed victory. And it is a victory of power that looks like weakness. It looked as though Jesus had been sort of stripped back to absolutely nothing.

Total weakness. And yet, in his total weakness, he achieved an act of stupendous power in redeeming his people from, well, from the enemy who had carted them off and taken them captive.

[55 : 37] So here is a deliverance, the victory of deliverance. And I'm just thinking we've been reading this at home in 2 Corinthians, where Paul talks about his missionary life.

And he says that he's felt the sentence of death. He says, but people prayed. And he says in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 9, we felt the sentence of death.

But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril and will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers.

Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favour granted us in answer to the prayers of many. Prayer, deliverance, victory.

This is the area that we're in. And Abraham says, I raised my hand to the Lord. I think meaning I raised my hand in allegiance and in prayer.

[56 : 43] And so here is the victory of deliverance. God is a God of deliverance. And he's a God who in his own way and in his own time delivers us.

Amen. Well, number three then. The mystery of reception. The mystery of reception. The geography of faith.

The victory of deliverance. The mystery of reception. And what on earth do I mean by that? I'm going to look at the way Abraham was received when he returned. So in verse 17 he returns and he gets met by the...

Abraham returned from defeating Kedalema and the kings allied with him. And the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh. That is the king's valley. So on his return he is met. And we're going to look at the reception. There's something quite mysterious about this. So here is Abraham, the victor, returning with the people and the goods.

[57 : 46] You remember that word goods. And he's met in particular by two people. Melchizedek, the king of Salem, and the king of Sodom.

And we're going to look at the reception that these two people give to Abraham. So let's look first, in reverse order as it were, on the reception by the king of Sodom.

And there's a picture of the king of Sodom. Just remember that Sodom is a place of wickedness. And those place names included Ra, Rasha, meaning evil.

That's what it says in the book I read anyway. And also remember that the destiny of people in these stories is determined by their reaction to Abraham.

Those who bless you, I will bless. Those who despise you, I will curse, says the Lord. So what does the king of Sodom do? In verse 21 he says to Abraham, Give us the people, keep the goods for

yourself.

[58 : 46] I didn't quite quote it right, did I? Give me the people, keep the goods for yourself. It's quite terse, isn't it? And what's he doing?

He's, well, he's trying to set the agenda, isn't he? He says this is what's going to happen. Give me the people, keep the goods for yourself.

He tries to set the agenda, which is not really his place, because he's just been defeated. He ought to be in a place of saying, thank you so much.

I mean, really, I'm just totally in your debt. Christianity is about humbling ourselves before the Lord and his grace, isn't it?

It's not us setting the agenda for him. Well, the king of Sodom tries to set the agenda. He doesn't say please or thank you. There is a word for please in Hebrew.

[59 : 44] He certainly doesn't use it. He just says, give us the people, keep the goods for yourself. There's a certain rudeness to this king. And in being rude to Abraham, he is despising the man at the centre of God's plan.

And that, as we've seen several times, is the exact not thing to do. Those who despise you, I will despise, says God. He despises the man at the centre of God's plan.

And I'll just pause to say, please don't do this to Jesus. The key man in salvation now is not Abraham, although he is part of the long trail.

The key man is Jesus. Don't despise him. Don't put him off. Don't be rude to him. Don't forget to say please.

And don't forget to say thank you to Jesus. Jesus. Still thinking about the reception given by the king of Sodom, he says keep the goods.

[60 : 49] Now why is he saying keep the goods? He's offering a sort of payment to Abraham. Now Abraham does sort of take necessary expenses.

He says I will take what expenses have been incurred, what my men have eaten and the share belongs, the men that were with me. But I'm not going to profit from this venture via you, says Abraham.

Abraham. This was not something I did for the money, says Abraham. This was a matter of prayer. I lifted my hand to the Lord, the God most high.

And it was a matter of loyalty before God. That was why I did it. I'm not going to make money out of it. I'm certainly not going to allow you to say I paid Abraham to do this.

And I don't want to be able to look back and anybody say Abraham got where he was because of the king of Sodom. I don't want to be in that situation, says Abraham.

[61 : 58] So I won't accept anything from you. No, not a little bit. I want to give the credit to God for his grace. I've lifted my hands to the Lord.

And that's when the story's told. I don't want it to be said, oh, well done, king of Sodom. Good on you.

I want it to be said that was God that did all that. Credit to him. Praise to him. Praise his glorious grace for the things he had done.

And that's a right place to be, isn't it? To look on our lives the way the Lord leads us and has led us and say that was his grace.

And all the credit goes to him. Thank you, Lord, for what you've done. So let's look, having looked at the reception by the king of Sodom, let's look at the reception by the king of Salem.

[62 : 56] And really, this is where the story really starts. Melchizedek, verse 18, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine.

He was a priest of God Most High. So here he is. There's a picture of him. And he comes out of nowhere. With no introduction to him, we just told Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine.

And actually we never hear of him again in this historical context. We note that he is not introduced to us with a genealogy. We're not told who his mother and father were or his grandparents.

He doesn't have that. He is not described to us in that way. And when we get back to Hebrews, we'll find this is a big contrast with the other priests, the Levitical priests, for whom genealogy was everything.

If they didn't have that, they had nothing. But Melchizedek isn't that style. And we notice that he's not a member of Abraham's family. He's not a Jew. He is a Gentile.

[63 : 57] And he's a remarkable thing. This is why I use this word mystery. So he comes out of nowhere. And he is a believer. Abraham sees him as one of, you know, on the same side, definitely.

He's a priest of God Most High. He knows the secrets of the Lord. He has access to the Lord. And Abraham recognizes this. Now, where does this come from?

Who evangelized him? I've no idea. But here he is. It's a strange thing. Isn't it a rather mysterious thing? And we leave it as a mystery that the Lord has his people in all sorts of places.

And the Lord can work in all sorts of ways. And he doesn't owe us an explanation. But here is this chap. And his name. Melchizedek.

Well, Melek is the Hebrew word for king. And Tzedek is the Hebrew word for righteousness. So his name contains in it king of righteousness.

[64 : 54] And the place of which he is king, Salem. Which, if you look on your footnote, and certainly my footnote, says that is Jerusalem. The place where later on King David would reign.

God's forever key king. And so he's a sort of beginning or a prefiguring of that. So here is Melchizedek. This figure mysteriously imprinted on history.

The king priest of Jerusalem. And here is something you say, wow. Wow. Let's follow that trail and see where it leads.

Because it must lead somewhere. What's this doing here? And I can assure you it's a better story with a more wonderful ending. And a much more substance than anything Indiana Jones ever came up with.

And you might ask the question, actually, can we unravel the mystery by saying, actually, this is Jesus ahead of time. And I'm going to say, no, I don't think that's right.

[66 : 00] Because in Hebrews 7.3 it says he's like the Son of God. It doesn't say he is the Son of God. He's like the Son of God. He's a sort of mysterious pattern that looks for explanation in the future.

He sets a pattern. And we will be looking at the order of Melchizedek. A priest in the order of Melchizedek. We'll come back to that in the future as God helps us.

So let's look then at this reception by the king of Salem. What does he do? Well, in brief, he brings out a banquet. Verse 18. He brought out bread and wine.

I don't think that's meant to mean just a couple of sandwiches. I think it's meant to indicate a feast, a banquet. It's very generous of him. He's a source of great generosity.

It's a rich provision. And he brings a name. He says, he blesses Abraham. Verse 19. Blessed be Abraham by God Most High, creator of heaven and earth.

[67 : 01] And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. So he reveals something about God. He brings this name, God Most High, possessor or creator, perhaps possessor, of heaven and earth.

And you'll see that Abraham latches onto that. And he says, yes, I will now use that word and that extra step of revelation, if you like, in my understanding of who the Lord is.

He learns this and accepts it. And the third thing that the king of Salem brings is a blessing. He brings a banquet and a name and a blessing. And you will see it there in verse 19.

He blessed Abraham. Blessed be Abraham by God Most High, creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.

So he brings blessing. There's a sort of sparkling, wonderful blessing that Melchizedek brings. And so we presume, having been a blessing to Abraham, he receives a blessing.

[68 : 05] There's blessing all over the place here. What a wonderful thing. I just stop and say, you know, sometimes we don't know when we're blessed. I know people sometimes are very kind to say, oh, I was blessed listening to this or I was blessed taking part in that.

And sometimes people are conscious of that. But we're not always conscious of being blessed. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and say all sorts of things against you falsely.

You know, we wouldn't know that was a blessing unless Jesus told us. And, you know, at this present time, perhaps we're not realising that God is blessing us.

By putting us through, testing, challenging. You know, he's doing something. He knows what he's doing. It doesn't feel much like a blessing to us.

But maybe we'll look back and say, you know, there were things I learnt about myself. Things I learnt about the Lord that I could not have learnt anyway. I was blessed. Anyway, Melchizedek brings a blessing.

[69 : 08] And Abraham, and here the story really starts, Abraham responds with a tithe. And this is in verse 20. Abraham gave him a tenth of everything.

And that's why I put Abraham like that. He's sort of offering a tenth to the king of Salem. A tithe, a tenth, is an act of respectful devotion to a superior.

I might just stop a little bit obliquely and say giving of money to the Lord by tithing is still on. The New Testament doesn't pin down tithe, but a tithe will be a tenth of proportion.

It's not a bad guideline. And just let me say, if you do have money at your disposal, which is yours to dispose of, without interfering with the family finances or anything like that, if you've got money to dispose of, which is yours to dispose of, I hope you are regularly and deliberately doing something of the nature of a tithe.

I'm not going to go any further than that. I want to specify. But if you have money at your disposal and you are not regularly emptying your hands of it, you're missing something.

[70 : 29] Because there is a blessing in letting go of money. It's a blessing spiritually. And if you haven't got that in order, I say get it in order.

Make that your New Year's resolution. Well, here is Abraham giving a tithe to Melchizedek. And as I'm saying, this is a respectful devotion to somebody who is a superior.

If you give a tithe to Melchizedek, which is what Abraham was doing. And you say, well, hold on a minute. That can't be right. Because surely Abraham is the important person in this story.

He's the key figure in blessing for the world. And I say, yeah, that's what I thought too. But we do have here that Abraham gives a tithe to Melchizedek.

And that somehow Melchizedek is somehow superior to Abraham. Well, that's a thing. And I'm not going to take it any very much further this morning.

[71 : 31] But I'm going to say, look, here's a trail worth following. Here's a trail of somebody embedded here in ancient scripture, in ancient prophecy. And it's almost like God has signed, follow this, because this is something.

Follow the trail. Follow the trail of the king of righteousness who reigns in Zion, the city of peace. I forgot to say that Salem is associated with the word shalom, peace.

And this king is also a priest. And here is something embedded in the Hebrew scriptures, a fact and a feature of Hebrew scriptures, which sort of invites and demands following up.

Follow the trail and see where this leads. Well, that's what we're going to be doing over the next few weeks, God willing. Do you know where it leads?

This great salvation and this great figure who is pointed to by Melchizedek. Do you know? I'm not going to spoil it by telling you.

[72 : 39] But the clue will be in the song that we're going to sing in a minute. So let's follow the trail to the great salvation that this figure shows us.

Amen. So there we are. We've heard about Melchizedek and I hope that's been helpful to us. We're going to close with this song, which is 676 in the Fellingham version.

To God be the glory, great things he has done. And God has done great things. And he gave us his son and he yielded his life and atonement for sin and opened the life gate that we may go in.

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Let the earth hear his voice. Let his people rejoice. Oh, come to the Father through Jesus the Son and give him the glory.

Great things he has done. That's what we're going to sing. And then we'll close in prayer. God be the glory.

[73 : 46] Great things he has done.

So loved he has done. So loved he the world that he gave us his Son. Who yielded his life and atonement for sin.

And opened the life gate that all may go in. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Let the earth hear his voice. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Let the people rejoice.

Come to the Father through Jesus the Son. Give him the glory.

[74 : 53] Great things he has done. Oh, perfect redemption.

