

Genesis 14:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations;

Analysis

And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer kin... This passage is part of the Abrahamic narratives which shift from universal human history to God's particular covenant people. The Abraham cycle (Genesis 12-25) demonstrates God's sovereign election, covenant faithfulness, and the development of faith through testing and promise fulfillment.

Central themes include God's unconditional covenant promises (land, descendants, blessing to nations), the call to faith and obedience, the testing of faith through delays and impossibilities, the contrast between divine promises and human schemes, and God's gracious persistence despite human failures. Abraham emerges as the father of faith whose trust in God's promises becomes the model for all believers (Romans 4, Galatians 3, Hebrews 11).

Theologically, these narratives establish:

1. salvation by grace through faith rather than works
2. covenant as God's gracious initiative binding Himself to His people
3. the necessity of patient trust when promises seem impossible
4. the consequences of attempting to fulfill God's promises through human effort
5. the pattern of divine testing producing mature faith.

The Abraham cycle foreshadows Christ as the ultimate seed through whom blessing extends to all nations (Galatians 3:16).

Historical Context

The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What does this passage reveal about God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
2. How should this truth about Divine Deliverance shape our daily decisions and priorities?
3. What connections can we trace from this verse to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Interlinear Text

וַיְהִי י	בַּיָּמִי	אֲמֶרֶף ל	מֶלֶךְ	שִׁנְעָר	אֲרִיֹּחַ
H1961	And it came to pass in the days	of Amraphel	king	of Shinar	Arioch
	H3117	H569	H4428	H8152	H746
מֶלֶךְ	אֵלְסָר	כְּדֹרְלֹאֶם	מֶלֶךְ	וַתְּדַע ל	מֶלֶךְ
king	of Ellasar	Chedorlaomer	king	and Tidal	king
H4428	H495	H3540	H4428	H5867	H8413
					H4428
גִּזְרֵם:					
of nations					
H1471					

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 10:10 (Kingdom): And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

Genesis 11:2 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

Genesis 10:22 (Parallel theme): The children of Shem; Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram.

Isaiah 11:11 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from

Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

Isaiah 37:12 (Parallel theme): Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar?

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