“17Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). 18And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High” (Gen. 14:17–18).

Abram's meeting with two kings is described in 14:17–24. This section records an important decision Abram had to make after he returned victoriously from his battle with the Mesopotamian kings.

14:17 The “valley of Shaveh” was near Jerusalem (the “Salem” of verse 18). It may have been the Kidron (or Black) Valley immediately east of the city or some other valley not far away.

14:18 "Melchizedek" was probably a title rather than a proper name. It means "King of Righteousness" or "My King is Righteous." Compare Adonizedek ("Lord of Righteousness") in Josh. 10:1, 3. However theophoric names (names containing a name of God) were common in the ancient Near East, so his name may have meant "My king is Sedeq" or "Milku is righteous," Sedeq and Milku presumably being the names of gods. The names of both the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 2) are compounds of a Hebrew word translated "evil" (cf. 13:13).

The Rabbis have a curious conceit about the origin of the name Jerusalem, which is commonly taken to mean, “the foundation,” “the abode,” or “the inheritance of peace.” They make it a compound of Jireh and Shalem, and say that Abraham called it “Jehovah-Jireh,” while Shem had named it “Shalem,” but that God combined the two into Jireh-Shalem, Jerushalaim, or Jerusalem. (Berakot. Rabbah.)

Bread and wine were the royal food and drink of the day. Many writers have commented on their typical significance, though there is no basis for connecting them directly with the elements used in the Lord's Supper.

Many ancient Near Easterners used bread and wine in making covenants. Melchizedek, the first priest mentioned in the Bible, evidently gave a royal banquet in Abram's honor. In view of their characters and geographical proximity, Abram and Melchizedek may have been friends before this meeting. Melchizedek may have been Abram's king to whom the patriarch was paying an expected obligation.
“19 He blessed him and said, ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; 20 and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.’ He gave him a tenth of all” (Gen. 14:19–20).

14:19 Melchizedek blessed Abram, and so set himself up for God’s blessing (cf. 12:3). The God whom Melchizedek worshipped as a priest was the true God known to him as El Elyon, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth. This title reveals the sovereign power of God over the nations. Both Melchizedek and Abram regarded Abram’s recent victory in battle as due to the blessing of El Elyon (cf. v. 22). This shows that both of them worshipped the true, living God.

14:20 People practiced tithing as an act of worship commonly in the ancient Near East at this time (cf. 28:22). It was also a common tax (10%). This is still true in some modern countries. For example, in England part of every person’s taxes goes to maintain the Church of England. Some residents regard this part of their tax as their contribution to the church or their tithe. However since Melchizedek gave Abram a priestly blessing, it is likely that Abram reciprocated by giving Melchizedek a gift with priestly connotations. In some cases, people gave tithes to those whom they regarded as superiors, as a sign of their respect. "All" probably refers to all that he took in the battle rather than all that was in Abram’s possession (cf. vv. 23–24; Heb. 7:4).
“21 The king of Sodom said to Abram, ‘Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.’ 22 Abram said to the king of Sodom, ‘I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, “I have made Abram rich.” 24 I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share’” (Gen. 14:21–24).

14:21–24 Abram identified El Elyon with Yahweh (v. 22). His willingness to take no spoil from the battle for himself demonstrates Abram's desire that God would receive all the glory for Abram's prosperity. He also appears not to have wanted to be indebted to the wicked king of Sodom. This man may have, by his command to Abram, been setting him up for demands later (cf. 23:15). The gifts of the ungodly are often attached to deadly strings.

Generally, the patriarchs believed that God would give them what He had promised without their having to take it from others. Abram was content with what God had given him (cf. Phil. 4:11).

Just as in the previous episode where Abram allowed Lot the pick of the land, so here he allows the surly king of Sodom more than his due.

Christians are so rich in their own inheritance that it ill becomes them to crave the possessions of others.

This event is significant because it demonstrates Abram's trust in God to provide what He had promised, which God soon rewarded with another revelation and promise (15:1).

Even without the explicit warning that “he who disdains you I shall curse” (12:3), the narrative suggests that it is dangerous to despise those through whom God works. It is the demonstration of divine support for Abram that is the clearest thrust of this story. Within Genesis, however, Melchizedek is primarily an example of a non-Jew who recognizes God's hand at work in Israel. They are those who have discovered that in Abram all the families of the earth find blessing.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews expounded the typical significance of Melchizedek and the events of this incident (in Heb. 7; cf. Ps. 110:4). A type is a divinely intended illustration of something else that follows, the antitype.

Confidence that God will preserve and provide for His own as He has promised should encourage believers to decline worldly benefits and wait for God's blessings.
There are several life lessons (applications) that derive from a study of Genesis 14:

1. Friendship with the world can tarnish a believer’s blessing from God. Worldliness and disobedience will diminish a believer’s reward (2 John 8), but it cannot forfeit the believer’s salvation (Rom. 8:38–39).

2. Friendship with the world is hostility toward God. The believer who wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself or herself an enemy of God (James 4:4).

3. God gives His chosen people victory over the world in accordance with His promises to bless and to curse, using His servants who know His high calling and will engage the enemy with courage. The people of God may be confident of ultimate victory over those who threaten God’s program of blessing.

4. Faithful believers are the victorious people of God and may be assured of discernment to distinguish God’s blessing from worldly treasure.

5. God’s blessing and the world’s benefits are easily confused. Wisdom is necessary to discern what is from God and what is from the world. This involves wisdom to discern the nature and motive of anyone who would give or offer to give worldly treasure.

6. The people of God must champion righteousness in the way God has instructed us to do so, which today requires spiritual weapons. The Body of Christ cannot defeat spiritual wickedness by overthrowing corrupt governments or legislating better laws and ordinances. The conflict is far greater than such efforts and calls for divine power for the victory.

7. The people of God may win spiritual struggles, but in the limelight of their success they may give away all the glory to some pagan pretender who would be delighted to rob God of the credit for spiritual success.