

The Patriarchs

Genesis Chapter 19

November 25, 2018

The Destruction of Sodom

God Rescues Lot

Genesis 19:1-3 (ESV) ¹ *The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth* ² *and said, "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the town square."* ³ *But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.*

Points to Consider

- A) Unlike Abraham, who immediately recognizes the supernatural nature of his visitors, Lot receives them as common travelers. It is not until verses 10 and 11, when the angels blind the crowd, that their true nature is revealed to and recognized by Lot.

Gen 19:1-2 "When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself..." / **Gen 18:2-3** "He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant"".

Question for Discussion: Why do you believe Abraham was able to recognize the supernatural nature of his visitors, whereas Lot was unable to?

- B) Lot is sitting in the gateway to the city when the visitors arrive. This would imply he had acquired some degree of social status. Maybe had even rose to some formal position within the community.

The city gate was the traditional location for civil decisions. Perhaps Lot's position at the gate infers he now has attained an influential role in the community. One thing for sure, the imagery of Lot sitting in the city gate adds to his urban profile versus Abraham's less materialistic tent.

Question for Discussion: If in fact, Lot has risen to an influential position within the city, what do you believe this would say about the nature of his relationship with the inhabitants of Sodom?

- C) Lot's hospitality toward the visitors compares unfavorably to the hospitality shown by Abraham during their visit to him.

Chapter 18 depicts Abraham's hospitality as exceeding that of Lot in a number of ways. For example, Abraham when seeing the travelers "ran" to greet them (18:2). Lot in comparison, "rose to meet them and bowed himself".

When the two hospitality accounts are compared, Lot does not say, as did Abraham, "*If I have found favor in your eyes*" when he invites them to stay at his home. This omission and the angels' initial refusal to spend the night indicates that Lot does not meet with the angels' approval. The Hebrew word used by the angels here when refusing Lot's offer is (*lō' kî*), which indicates that their refusal to Lot's offer was worded strongly. It would be similar to saying "No, indeed."

Another sign that Lot's hospitality is weak, at least in comparison to Abraham's, can be found in the nature of the evening meal. The supper consists of unleavened cakes, which by themselves fall short of the typical banquet or feast. Bread without yeast, it is said, is bread made in haste. Just as the bread the Israelites would later make to commemorate the Passover celebration.

Genesis 19:4-11 (ESV) ⁴ *But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house.* ⁵ *And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them."* ⁶ *Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him,* ⁷ *and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly.* ⁸ *Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof."* ⁹ *But they said, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them."* *Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door down.* ¹⁰ *But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door.* ¹¹ *And they struck with blindness the men who were at the entrance of the house, both small and great, so that they wore themselves out groping for the door.*

Points to Consider

- A) The scope and composition of the crowd that gathered outside Lot's door speaks to the pervasive degree of the city's wickedness. It was a wickedness that was complete. A multi-generational wickedness that had now infected even to the "last man".

Question for Discussion: What would the path to a state of total and complete wickedness in a community look like? What evolutionary stages would you expect to see in a community that morphs from a morally conscientious state, to wholesale moral depravity? Are there any stages in this metamorphosis that are similar to changes taking place in our society today? If so, give some examples.

- B) Lot was a righteous man... **2 Peter 2:8 (ESV)** ⁸ *(for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard);* However, he consistently makes choices that place he and his family far too near activities and lifestyles of a sinful nature.

Question for Discussion: We find in chapter 19 that Lot has moved into the city of Sodom, a city completely devoid of moral character. In what ways can we see the impact such a perverted community has had on his own moral and spiritual conscience? Do you believe our lives as Christians today are influenced by secular influences in a similar way? Can you give any examples?

Genesis 19:12-22 (ESV) ¹² Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place. ¹³ For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it." ¹⁴ So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, "Up! Get out of this place, for the Lord is about to destroy the city." But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting. ¹⁵ As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city." ¹⁶ But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. ¹⁷ And as they brought them out, one said, "Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away." ¹⁸ And Lot said to them, "Oh, no, my lords. ¹⁹ Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life. But I cannot escape to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me and I die. ²⁰ Behold, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there—is it not a little one?—and my life will be saved!" ²¹ He said to him, "Behold, I grant you this favor also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. ²² Escape there quickly, for I can do nothing till you arrive there." Therefore, the name of the city was called Zoar.

Points to Consider

- A) Abraham's bargaining with the Lord had no impact on the ultimate fate of Sodom and Gomorrah.

"...suppose there are fifty righteous in the city...", *"...suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking..."*, *"...suppose forty are found there..."*, *"...suppose thirty are found there..."*, *"...suppose twenty are found..."*, *"...suppose ten are found there. He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it."*

Here the sad reality is, not even ten were found righteous. The angels pronounce judgement. The fate of the wicked is sealed.

Question for Discussion: God's righteous judgement had been rendered against Sodom and Gomorrah prior to the visit made to Abraham in chapter 18. It was perfect judgement and it was going to be carried out. What was the point of including the whole record of the bargaining process between Abraham and the Lord in chapter 18, if it ultimately had no impact on the judgement rendered against Sodom?

- B) It would seem almost certain that Lot's future sons-in-laws were present when the crowd gathered around Lot's house. They very likely would have witnessed the miraculous blinding of

those around the door to Lot's house. Yet, even witnessing these events, they cannot accept the message given to them from Lot.

Question for Discussion: Why is it likely that Lot's future sons-in-law were present in the crowd that gathered around his home? Why do you believe they found it impossible to believe the warning that Lot had given them?

- C) Lot is now fully aware of the supernatural nature of his two visitors. He has been clearly warned of the impending destruction of Sodom and instructed by the angelic visitors to leave immediately. Inexplicably, he lingers...seemingly without any purpose. Finally, the Lord's messengers take it upon themselves to forcefully lead he and his family outside the city.

Question for Discussion: What reasons can you come up with that might explain Lot's strange behavior and total lack of any sense of urgency in the face of the warning he has received?

- D) Like Abraham, Lot bargains with God, asking for a more convenient path of escape. Instead of following their instructions to flee to the surrounding hills, he instead pleads for refuge to be found in the nearby town of Zoar. The name "Zoar" is derived from the size of the city, "small" (miṣ'ār).
- E) The angles instruct Lot to not only flee the town of Sodom, but not even to look back while they flee.

Question for Discussion: It's understandable that time was of essence, but why do you believe it was imperative that no one even look back to witness the destruction while fleeing?

God Destroys Sodom

Genesis 19:23-29 (ESV) ²³ *The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar.* ²⁴ *Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven.* ²⁵ *And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.* ²⁶ *But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.*

²⁷ *And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord.* ²⁸ *And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and he looked and, behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.*

²⁹ *So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.*

Points to Consider

- A) Verses 23 and 24 report the time and nature of the destruction, and verses 25 and 26 narrate the extent of the destruction, including the end of Lot's wife. The destruction occurs only after Lot arrives safely in Zoar, as promised by the angel in verse 21.

The destruction occurs about one full day since the visitors first arrived at Abraham's tent. The most likely time of destruction would be from around late morning to noontime. The destruction is total and complete, consuming all remnants of civilization and even all vegetation. The degenerate population of Sodom sinned under the cover of night, but their punishment was delivered in the full light of day.

- B) The precise location of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the other cities of the plain, remains uncertain. The note in **Genesis 14:3** "*And all these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea)*"... strongly suggests that at some time after the events now related, the waters of the Dead Sea covered the sites. If so (and archaeology has yet to solve the problem), the southern end of the Dead Sea must be meant.
- C) Lot's wife was most likely a Sodomite. There is no mention of her anywhere to chapter 19, unless we are to assume she was among the women rescued by Abram in chapter 14. In any case, she remains nameless, no more than a prop in the story whose tragic end became a dreaded lesson referenced by Christ in **Luke 17:32** "*Remember Lot's wife.*"
- D) We know from **2 Peter 2:7** that Lot was a righteous man, but because of his tendency to live his life on the margins of sin, he paid a tremendous price. Losing...
 - a. **The power of his testimony v. 14** *So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, "Up! Get out of this place, for the Lord is about to destroy the city." But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.*
 - b. **His wife v. 26** *But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.*
 - c. **His sons-in-law, his friends, his property (he went in rich but came out poor), his life's work and nearly his life.**

Question for Discussion: Although we can be assured of our salvation through Christ, do you believe the decisions we make in our daily lives lead to meaningful consequences for us and those around us? If so, what's the point? Aren't we going to end up in heaven with the saved anyway? Why would God allow his children to experience the painful consequences of our poor decisions while we live here on earth?

- E) "God remembered", identifies the prior covenant obligation God made with Abraham as the basis for the divine intervention on Lot's behalf. Not the righteousness of Lot. "God remembered", directly refers to the privileged position of Abraham.

In a final jibe at Lot's failure, against the background of God's favor toward Abraham, the author mentions again that the destroyed cities are those "where Lot had lived."

Question for Discussion: Do you believe God would have spared Lot's life if Abraham had not bargained with Him on the behalf of the righteous?

Lot and His Daughters

Genesis 19:30-38 (ESV) ³⁰ Now Lot went up out of Zoar and lived in the hills with his two daughters, for he was afraid to live in Zoar. So he lived in a cave with his two daughters. ³¹ And the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the earth. ³² Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father." ³³ So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father. He did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

³⁴ The next day, the firstborn said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father. Let us make him drink wine tonight also. Then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father." ³⁵ So they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. ³⁶ Thus both the daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father. ³⁷ The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day. ³⁸ The younger also bore a son and called his name Ben-ammi. He is the father of the Ammonites to this day.

Points to Consider

- A) The intent of Lot's daughters to "preserve the family line" was honorable on its own. But, the means of incest was deplorable according to **Leviticus 18:6-7** "None of you shall approach any one of his close relatives to uncover nakedness. I am the Lord. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father,..."
- B) The names given to the sons bore by Lot's daughters are significant. "Moab" was apparently derived from the combination of min ("from") plus āb ("father"), which becomes mē'āb, "from [my] father". "Ben-Ammi," born to the younger daughter, is "son of my [paternal] kinsmen" or singular "kinsman."

By embedding the term "father" (āb) in "Moab" and "kin" (ām) in "Ben-Ammi," the names of these half-brothers provided future detractors a jibe at the scandalous roots of their descendants. These future descendants almost comically perpetuate the double entendre by taking on names that reflected their ancestral origins. Mō'āb, "Moabites," and bēnē 'ammôn, "Ammonites."

- C) In the future, Israel's relations with the descendants of Lot would involve continued hostilities with the Moabites and Ammonites becoming recurring thorns in Israel's side. It was Moabite women who later seduced the men of Israel to commit immorality.

Numbers 25:1-3 (ESV) ¹ While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab. ² These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. ³ So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

And, it was the Ammonites who taught Israel the worship of Molech, including the sacrifice of children...

1 Kings 11:33 (ESV) ³³ *because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and they have not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my rules, as David his father did.*

- D) Despite the tawdry roots of Lot's offspring and the future conflict they would engage in with the children of Israel, the prophets envision an era of restoration when the Lord will favor anew the descendants of Lot.

Jeremiah 49:6 (ESV) ⁶ *"But afterward I will restore the fortunes of the Ammonites, declares the Lord."*

The union of Ruth the Moabitess and Judah's descendant Boaz, reconciled the alienated families of Lot and Abraham, providing for Israel's greatest king...King David!

Ruth 4:13 (ESV) ¹³ *So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. And he went in to her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son.*

Ruth 4:18-22 (ESV) ¹⁸ *Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, ¹⁹ Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, ²¹ Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, ²² Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.*

Question for Discussion: What do you believe is the primary message (or messages), we should take from Genesis chapter 19? What are the applications we can take from the chapter and apply to our lives today?