



GENESIS 18-20 SODOM & GOMORRAH; LOT'S FATE

After Abraham fed his very special guests that turned out to be God and two angels, these three set out for Sodom. The Bible says, "Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. And the Lord said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For ***I have known him***, in order that he may ***command*** his children and his household after him, ***that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him***'" (Gen. 18:16-19).

There are two important truths revealed here.

One is that God did visit people in the Old Testament, but the question is--was it ***God the Father***, or ***God the Word***? Since the Bible states They both existed from the beginning, it could be either one of Them (John 1:1-3). But Scriptures then clarify, "***No one has seen God at any time***. The only begotten ***Son***, who is in the bosom of the Father, ***He has declared Him***" (John 1:1-3, 14-18). Here, God clearly means God the Father, and the Son is Christ ***who revealed His existence***. Then Jesus said, "Your father ***Abraham*** rejoiced ***to see My day***, and he ***saw it*** and was glad" (John 8:56). So Jesus affirms Abraham saw Him, and not God the Father. Also, the Bible reveals, "They all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses ...For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, ***and that Rock was Christ***" (1 Cor. 10:4). So all the appearances of God on the earth (called theophanies) were not of God the Father, but of ***God the Word***, who later became Jesus Christ.

The second great truth in this passage is that although God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants was based on grace, or unmerited favor and pardon, God still expected them to do their part by obeying Him, and not turn to idolatry or they could be rejected. But God had seen Abraham was constantly faithful, and knew he would teach his descendants the way of God. But notice God conditions these promises. If they rebelled, He would have to punish them, and some would eventually apostatize and be expelled from the covenant promises. As Paul explains, "Looking

carefully lest anyone ***fall short of the grace of God***...lest there be any fornicator or profane person ***like Esau***, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears" (Heb. 12:15-17). This is an important biblical principle--God's love and promises are undeserved and constant, but at the same time, one can apostatize from the faith and lose those promises. If you deliberately break God's law and "turn the grace of our God into lewdness" (Jude 4) you can lose your opportunity for salvation.

Back to the passage in question. Because of Abraham's faithfulness, God revealed to him His plans to pass judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. "And the Lord said, 'Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me: and if not, I will know'" (Gen. 18:20). Notice God gave Sodom and Gomorrah a chance. He wanted to see for Himself if the outcry from the angels who were in charge of informing Him was accurate.

Abraham knows Lot is there and so becomes very alarmed. Besides, he had befriended many there, especially when he rescued Lot and brought back the spoils to the king of Sodom. Abraham had become a big hero to them. So he pleaded with God to spare the cities if there were fifty righteous people found among the teeming thousands. God accepted Abraham's number, but then Abraham worried there might not be that many. He whittled the figure down to just ten. God said if there were only ten righteous, He would not destroy the city, and Abraham is satisfied.

That evening, God first sent the two angels to go inside of Sodom. Lot met them, recognized they were "special" since he bowed down before them and invited them to his home for protection. But the angels wanted to spend the night in the open square to fully witness what was going on. Nonetheless, Lot prevailed upon them and they entered his home. But it was too late--the townspeople had already seen them go in and were lusting after them. The Bible says, "Now before they lay down, the men of

the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that *we may know them carnally*?’ (19:4-5).

How did Sodom become so perverse? The Bible reveals what was the underlying problem. It says, “Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit” (Ezekiel 16:49-50).

The excess of wealth, idleness and selfishness led them to sexually pervert themselves. Jude 7 says of them, “As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to *sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh*, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

This same pattern has been the undoing of many civilizations, including the collapse of the Roman Empire. History records that most of the emperors were homosexuals. Gibbon gives the five reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire as: (1) Affluence; (2) a widening gap between the very rich and the very poor; (3) an obsession with sex; (4) freakishness in the arts; (5) an increased desire to live off the State. Unfortunately, all of these factors are present and increasing in our Western civilization! The handwriting is on the wall.

Lot lived in the midst of all of this moral degeneration and the Bible says of him, “righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) – then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment” (2 P. 2:6-9). This principle is applicable today as it was then.

When the men of Sodom tried to grab the angels disguised as young men, Lot, in his desperation, offered them his daughters instead. *The Evangelical Commentary* notes, “Lot offers to turn over his two daughters as surrogates for the two angels. Perhaps he considers this the lesser of two evils. As host he must allow no harm to come upon his guests while they are under his roof. That was an ancient Near

Eastern law of hospitality. But this does not mean that Lot was justified in his action.”

The two angels had seen enough. The Bible says, “And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door” (Gen. 19:11). The angels asked Lot if he had any more family members in the city, and Lot replied he had two sons-in-law. Lot warned them of the looming destruction, but they didn’t believe him and refused to go. Dawn came, and Lot still “lingered,” trying to persuade them to leave. The angels had to forcibly take Lot and his family out of the city. They told them not to look back and to flee to the mountains. Lot got them to spare a small town called Zoar. “Then the Lord rained brimstone [sulfur] and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah...So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground” (Gen. 19:24-25).

The destruction was complete. “And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord. Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and...*the smoke of the land* which went up *like the smoke of a furnace*” (Gen. 19:28).

The evidence in the southern area around the Dead Sea is amazing. Werner Keller describes the desolation: “No shellfish, no fish, no seaweed, no coral—no fishing boat has ever rocked on this sea. Here was neither a harvest from the sea nor from the land. Huge deposits of *coagulated salt* made the beach and the rock face above it sparkle in the sun like diamonds. The air was filled with sharp acrid odors, a mixture of *petroleum and sulfur*. Oily patches of asphalt—the Bible calls it “slime” float on the waves. Even the bright blue sky and the all powerful sun could not breathe any life into this forbidding looking landscape” (*The Bible as History*, p. 76). Geologists have found in the southern environs of the Dead Sea, “sulfur” balls. This is the only place on earth where sulfur (brimstone) has been found in round balls and tests show they had been on fire. As they rained down on the area, all the flammable objects in the city caught fire, and the heat from the burning sulfur, estimated at up to 4,000 degrees, created the furnace-like smoke that Abraham saw. Josephus, the Jewish first-century historian, mentions in his day, one could go down to that area and still touch trees and

fruits that turned into ash. He mentioned the shadows of the cities could still be seen. Then there are also odd salt figures in that region, that remind one of the fate of Lot's wife. "But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt" (Gen. 19:20). The angels warned them not to look back, but she had longed for Sodom, and was not repelled by the sins there. In a sense, her body walked out, but she left her heart there. She was probably quite active in her community, and forgot to cry out as Lot had done about the wickedness all around. This is a lesson for all of us, not to become complacent about this society and "love" it. Christ warned about the end time: "In that day...let him not turn back. *Remember Lot's wife*. Whoever seeks to *save* his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it" (Luke 17:31-33).

Lot and his daughters made it to Zoar, but didn't stay there very long, for he was afraid of staying around that horribly devastated plain. Instead, they dwelt in a cave. The two daughters, now without their future husbands nor their mother, despaired of preserving the lineage of their father, and decided to take matters into their own hands. They knew he would not go along with their plans, for it would be sin, so they got him so drunk in two consecutive nights, they were able to get pregnant. The Bible says, "Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day. And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the people of Ammon to this day" (Gen. 19:36-38). The descendants of these two tribes would populate what is today known as Jordan.

Thus, Sodom and Gomorrah disappeared from history. It is interesting that the existence of Sodom is confirmed in the Ebla tablets, dated around 2,200 B.C. Of the 290 ancient place names that appear in these tablets, city number 211 is Sodom. Also, six ancient stream channels have been found on the southeastern side of the Dead Sea, that once flowed into the southern plain, making it well-watered. The site now called Bab-edh-Dha, on the southeastern end of the Dead Sea shows all likelihood of being the remains of ancient Sodom. An enormous cemetery with thousands of buried people was totally burned up and covered with a layer of ash many feet in thickness. Other nearby sites are Numeira (Gomorrah), and Es-Safi (Zoar).

The word "sodomite" means a male homosexual and comes from the story of rampant homosexuality in Sodom. Yet, God loves the person, no matter what he does, but hates their sins and so has to punish them. In Corinth, several homosexuals had repented of their ways and had become church members. Paul said, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?...Neither fornicators...nor homosexuals [effeminate], nor sodomites [literally 'one who sleeps with a male']...will inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you*. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

After this incident, Abraham left Hebron and went south. Again he encountered lustful looks from the king toward Sarah. Remember, people still lived longer then than they do now, for Abraham lived to 175 and Sarah to 127 years old. So even at this stage, Sarah retained much of her beauty, and the custom was once entered the land of the king, he could take what he wanted. The Bible explains, "Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, 'She is my sister.' And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, 'Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife'" (Genesis 20:2-3).

Again Abraham did not have the faith to rely fully on God for protection, and God mercifully had to intervene. Then the hypocrisy of this king, similar to the incident with the Pharaoh, is revealed. He innocently asks Abraham, "What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin?" Actually, Abraham knew very well why he did this, because his life was in danger, but he again was quite diplomatic. Abimelech, who had been stricken with infertility, gave Sarah back to Abraham, and Abraham prayed and God healed Abimelech and his family. Thus, Abraham had to learn another powerful lesson about relying more on God.