



The Destruction of Sodom Genesis 18:16-20:18

Introduction

We have seen how God gave assurance to Abraham that the time had come for His promises to begin their fulfillment. Nearly twenty-five years had passed since God had made the covenant promise in Haran. He changed Abram's name to Abraham and his wife's name to Sarah. After establishing circumcision as the sign of the covenant, the Lord, with two angels, visited Abraham and revealed to him that Sarah would give birth to a son and an heir within the year.

Now God chooses to speak to Abraham as a friend and reveal His secret plans for dealing with wickedness in the cities nearby.

OUTLINE of GENESIS 18:16-20

- I. The Lord's Plan - Genesis 18:16-33**
- II. The Immorality of Sodom - Genesis 19:1-23**
- III. The Destruction at Sodom - Genesis 19:24-29**
- IV. Lot's Shame - Genesis 19:20-38**
- V. Abimelech and Abraham - Genesis 20:1-18**

I. The Lord's Plan - Genesis 18:16-33

- A. The Lord Reveals His Plan -
Genesis 18:16-22.

The Lord and his two angels directed their attention to Sodom. Although He already knew that the city was immoral and wicked (Genesis 13:13), God desired to show Abraham that His decision to destroy it was fully justified. He spoke His reasons to the patriarch, treating him as a trusted "*friend of God*" (Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23). By sharing this information with Abraham, the Lord established Abraham as His intimate friend, gave a warning example to Abraham's posterity for all time and challenged Abraham to act wisely and nobly for righteousness and justice, i.e. to shun wicked, immoral ways and keep the ways of God.

Application

Are you a friend of God? Do you have intimate, meaningful conversations with Him about the Scriptures, your blessings, your concerns, your needs and your heart's desires? Do you spend time in His word so you can "listen" to Him speaking to you? Do you talk with Him humbly and submissively? Do you thankfully ask Him to direct your thoughts and ways so that His purposes for your life may be fulfilled?

The two angels left and went toward Sodom while the Lord continued standing with Abraham. God's purpose was clear to Abraham, and he was very concerned. He knew there was a possibility of righteous people, even his own relatives, perishing in this impending disaster. He also knew that God would judge fairly and justly, but he did not know of the gross immorality that pervaded Sodom.

- B. Abraham Pleads for the Righteous -
Genesis 18:23-33

For the first time in Scripture, a man initiated a conversation with God. Notice throughout this dialogue that Abraham spoke with a high sense of his own unworthiness and was fully aware of the boldness of his questions. Abraham asked if God would still destroy the city if fifty righteous people could be found. His question may have been primarily prompted by his concern for his nephew, Lot, who was a righteous man. Lot had made a grossly improper decision when he chose to live in Sodom, but 2 Peter 2:7-8 clearly states that he was righteous. The Lord answered that He would spare the city for fifty righteous people. Abraham bravely continued to intercede, ultimately reducing the number of the righteous to ten.

We might ask, "On what basis were people considered righteous at this time?" H. C. Leupold (*The Biblical Expositor*) writes: "The Old Testament righteous are those who have made the proper use of truth they have, whether it be much or little, and have let it have its work on the heart, yielding to it not by their own powers but under the influence of this truth."

We should always remember that God does not delight in the destruction of the wicked. He is a God of goodness and mercy, totally above reproach. One commentator has noted that man definitely has a dark side, but God (thank goodness) assuredly does not! He is a God of justice. God states in Ezekiel 33:11: "*I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live*".

- C. Will God Spare a Nation Today?

This passage on Sodom is helpful in answering the question, "Will God spare a city or a nation today because of the Christians living in it?" Dr. Constable (*Notes on Genesis*) writes: "A godly minority does play a role in influencing God's judgment. It can delay judgment by promoting godliness. However, a godly

minority may not prevent God's judgment *if 'sin is very grievous'* (Genesis 18:20). God does not always choose to remove the righteous from the wicked before He judges the wicked as He did with Lot. Nevertheless, the Judge of all the earth does deal justly. We can see this when we take the long view. People alive now have yet to receive their final judgment from the divine judge."

II. The Wickedness of Sodom - Genesis 19:1-23

A. Lot's Hospitality - Genesis 19:1-3

Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom when the two angels arrived. The city gate was the place where the business and legal affairs of the community were conducted. Lot was at the gate with other "elders" indicating that he may have been a judge in the city. He greeted the two visitors and invited them to his house for a meal and a night's rest, demonstrating the hospitality which was so important in ancient cultures. Lot was also deeply concerned about the visitors' safety, acutely aware that it would be dangerous for them to spend the night in the open square. Apparently, at this time, Lot did not recognize these good and worthy men as angels.

B. Shocking Depravity of Sodom - Genesis 19:4-5

Lot prepared a feast for his visitors, but before they lay down for a night's rest, the shameful, burning lust (Romans 1:27) of the men of Sodom began to flame. The Scriptures note that the immoral group included *"both old and young, all the people from every quarter"*. They surrounded the house and called for Lot to turn the visitors over to them for homosexual activity. This shocking eagerness to gratify their unnatural lusts demonstrates an intensity of evil purpose that is an abomination to God (Leviticus 18:22).

Apparently, the magnitude of this prevalent vice of wholesale sexual abuse had completely replaced the sacred virtue of hospitality in the city of Sodom. In Genesis 13:13, at the time Lot first settled in Sodom, the Scriptures already recorded that *"the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord."* Such depraved acts, along with incest and bestiality, would later result in capital punishment and separation from God (Leviticus 20:13 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

C. Lot's Incomprehensible Offer - Genesis 19:6-9

Lot went outside in an effort to negotiate with the unruly, evil men. He offered his two virgin daughters in place of his guests, an act that is incomprehensible to us today. Lot must have been very confused to compromise with such an ungodly solution. The wicked perpetrators refused to accept Lot's proposal, threatening to deal

worse with him than with his visitors. The mob came near to break down the door.

Application

Ephesians 4:18-19 aptly describes the state of the men of Sodom as, *"having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."* They saw the world through carnal eyes and were unable to discern the heavenly nature of the men they desired to *"know carnally"* (19:5). They had given in to their own lusts so habitually that they craved more and more until their hearts became overwhelmingly stubborn and unrepentant (see Romans 2:5).

It is an undeniable fact that indulgence in sinful "pleasures" is a dangerous pastime which catches us in a downward spiral of sin and depravity. The more we give in, the more we crave. The pleasures of sin are only passing (Hebrews 11:25) and the deceitfulness of sin leads to hardness of heart (Hebrews 3:13) and death (Romans 6:23). Will you begin today to practice saying "no" to your sinful desires? What will you do to establish a habit of purity in your life?

D. The Angel's Supernatural Act - Genesis 19:10-14

The two angels reached out, pulled Lot into the house and shut the door. They cast a mist of blindness over the evildoers. It seems that the blindness was accompanied by mental confusion for the angry mob wore themselves out trying to find the door.

It was probably at this time that Lot saw the heavenly character and power of his guests and realized that they were angels. They informed Lot that the Lord had sent them to destroy Sodom and told him to take his family and relatives and *"get out of this place!"* When Lot relayed the message to his two sons-in-law, they thought he was joking.

E. Lot's Rescue - Genesis 19:15-23

The next morning the angels pressed Lot to take his wife and two unmarried daughters and leave the city immediately. But the thought of leaving his house and all of his possessions was difficult for Lot. Clinging to the material things of this world is also typical of the materialism of the present day.

Lot lingered, showing further unwillingness to leave his worldly comforts and goods. By the mercy of the Lord, the angels forcefully took Lot by the hand and led him, his wife, and two unmarried daughters outside the

city. One of the angels gave the order to hasten to the mountains to avoid destruction and not to look back. The thought of going to the mountains struck further fear in Lot's heart and he pleaded with the angels to send him instead to a small city on the plain. His request was granted and Lot went to the city of Zoar.

III. The Destruction at Sodom - Genesis 19:24-29

A. Brimstone and Fire - Genesis 19:24-25

After Lot and his family reached the safety of Zoar, the Lord "*rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah... out of the heavens*". The Book of Deuteronomy records that two other wicked cities on the plain of Jordan were also destroyed (Deuteronomy 29:23). The fact that the cities, all the plains surrounding them, all the inhabitants of the cities and all that grew on the ground suffered destruction implies that more than ordinary causes of nature were at work. Nothing points directly to a volcanic eruption or an earthquake. The Lord may have caused a supernatural explosion of highly flammable materials raining down "*brimstone and fire*" and causing extensive conflagration. The word "*brimstone*" associates with sulfur.

B. The Fate of Lot's Wife - Genesis 19:26

The fact that God rescued only four people from destruction is clear evidence that not even ten of the city's population were righteous. It is a notable fact that Lot's married daughters perished with their husbands. This illustrates the destructive influence of fraternizing with the world and the world's ways.

As for Lot's wife, although brought out of the city as one of the righteous, she was unable to detach herself from the longing, pity, or curiosity of the situation. She disregarded the divine injunction not to look back and when she did, "*she became a pillar of salt*". Evidently, Her thoughts and her heart were still in Sodom. Whether she was hit by explosive materials from the sky or chemically changed to salt cannot be determined. Her fatal example of disobedience is a warning sign to everyone who does not make a conclusive, uncompromising break with wickedness (Luke 17:32).

C. Abraham's Concern - Genesis 19:27-29

The next morning Abraham viewed the smoldering ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah from the place where he had stood before the Lord. It was a sad sight, but he was comforted by the knowledge that Lot had been rescued. It is important to recognize that God remembered Lot for Abraham's sake. The Lord was merciful to Lot (Genesis 19:16).

Application

Do you have a loved one who has one or both feet in this world of Satan's systems? Will you pray for that person earnestly and persistently, knowing that "*The*

effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much' (James 5:16). As one theologian said, "The blessings that go forth from one true-hearted servant of God are incalculable."

IV. Lot's Shame - Genesis 19:30-38

A. Lot's Contriving Daughters - Genesis 19:30-36

Lot became fearful of living in Zoar, perhaps because the people there blamed him for the destruction which had occurred. So Lot took his daughters and moved into a cave in the mountains. Because their married sisters had been killed and they were left with no men for husbands, the daughters contrived a plan to become impregnated by their father in order to preserve the family lineage. Lot's daughters had been corrupted by continued contact with people of wicked habits, and this, along with their own impulsiveness, impatience, and lack of faith led them to get Lot drunk and cohabit with him. Lot's intoxication and his daughters' tragic actions show the close relationship between drunkenness and sexual immorality.

B, Lot's Grandsons - Genesis 19:37-38

Two sons were born to Lot as a result of the incestuous union with his daughters. The descendants of these sons, the Moabites and the Ammonites, became a thorn in the side to Israel. These tribes became Israel's habitual enemies and Deuteronomy 23:3 records the Lord's command that no Ammonite or Moabite be allowed to enter the assembly of the Lord, even to the tenth generation.

C. Lot's Lapse From Grace

The story of Lot and his family provides a sobering reminder of the results of failing to live close to God and striving for an obedient lifestyle. Our moral environment and the lifestyles of those with whom we associate significantly influence our lives. Lot's unrighteous behavior at times indicates that he lapsed from the once "*righteous*" man mentioned in 2 Peter 2:7. He chose to live in Sodom. He sat as one of the judges at the gate in Sodom. He hesitated in leaving Sodom when it was about to be destroyed. Then twice, he became drunk and committed incest with his daughters in a cave.

Application

In the context of the Lord's Supper, 1 Corinthians 11:28 states, "*let a man examine himself*" to see if he is worthy to participate in this sacred commemoration. Do you examine your lifestyle periodically using the precepts and mandates of Scripture as your testing guidelines? Ask yourself, "Am I 'hooked' on the low-level, immoral

entertainment offered by most movies and television programs? Do I know more about the current movie stars and rock stars than I know about Joshua, Esther, Job, Barnabas, Philemon and other prominent Biblical characters? With whom do I feel more comfortable, those who love Jesus or those who love the world and all it offers?

V. Abraham and Abimelech - Genesis 20:1-18

A. Abraham's Deception - Genesis 20:1-2

Abraham lived a nomadic life and frequently moved his flocks and herds to find pasture and water. Leaving Mamre, he settled in Gerar, a Philistine city governed by King Abimelech. Knowing that it was customary for kings to bring beautiful women into their harem, and being fearful for his own life, Abraham told Abimelech that his ninety year old wife, Sarah, was his sister. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his wife's purity for his own life, once again (Genesis 12:11-13).

B. Abimelech's Character - Genesis 20:3-8

It was socially acceptable in those days for a king to have a harem of unmarried women, so Abimelech took Sarah into his house. God intervened in a dream to stop Abimelech from sinning and interrupting the divine plan for Sarah's offspring.

When Abimelech realized that Abraham had lied to him, he obeyed God's injunction to restore Sarah to her husband *"for he is a prophet and he will pray for you and you shall live."* Though not a Hebrew, Abimelech truly feared God and acted in a worthy and upright manner by responding to God's special revelation.

C. Abimelech Challenges Abraham - Genesis 20:9-13

Abimelech rebuked Abraham for holding back the full truth. Abraham's feeble excuses were self-serving and indicated a weakness of faith on this occasion. It would seem that Abraham would have abandoned the use of deception after his humiliating experience

in Egypt twenty-five years earlier. He had put Sarah in jeopardy then by telling the Pharaoh that she was his sister, not mentioning that she was his wife. Now, before Abimelech, he told the same half-truth, putting Sarah in jeopardy for his own personal safety. In spite of Abraham's failures in perpetuating a half-truth for twenty-five years, he was still a man of prayer. God was tolerant and faithful to His covenant promise of providing an heir. God graciously and forgivingly called Abraham a prophet and told Abimelech not only to restore Sarah, but to seek Abraham's prayers. (Abraham was a prophet in the sense of speaking God's truth and praying in God's service, not in the sense of foretelling future events.)

D. Abimelech's Response - Genesis 20:14-18

Abimelech responded to God's divine injunction by giving Abraham sheep, oxen, servants and a thousand silver pieces. He also granted him freedom to sojourn anywhere in the territory of Gerar. Abimelech's friendly disposition proved his fear of God and was accepted in good faith. Abraham stayed sufficiently long in the valley of Gerar to dig wells (Genesis 26:17-18).

Application

Do you think that it is sometimes acceptable to tell a lie and call it a "fib" or a "half-truth"? From Abraham's example, do you see that this kind of thinking is a sin and dishonoring to God? Will you begin to seek total honesty in your life and strive to always tell the full truth?

QUESTIONS

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read Notes and References.

1. On what basis were people considered righteous in Abraham's day?
2. How many people were involved in the wicked immoral behavior of Sodom?
3. What ungodly choices did Lot make? What do you learn from those choices?
4. What was the outcome of Lot's sexual relationship with his two daughters?
5. How did Abimelech respond to God's intervention to keep him from touching Sarah?

DAY TWO: Read Genesis 21:1-8, 17:17, 19.

6. a. Who was the long-awaited son of promise? _____
b. Was his time of arrival exactly as promised by God? Explain.
7. a. Who named the heir (Genesis 17:19) and what is the Hebrew meaning of his name?
b. Did his name reflect anything that Abraham and Sarah did when God promised them an heir? Explain.
8. How old were Abraham and Sarah when the heir was born?

DAY THREE: Read Genesis 21:9-21 and Galatians 4:29.

9. Describe the crisis that developed in Abraham's household.
10. Explain the meaning of God's statement "*for in Isaac your seed shall be called*".
11. What happened in the wilderness of Beersheba?

DAY FOUR: Read Genesis 21:22-34.

12. What words of Abimelech acknowledged that he honored the God of Abraham? Give verses.

13. What was the basic cause of the difficulty between Abimelech and Abraham that resulted in a covenant of peaceful coexistence?
14. What did Abraham give and receive as a result of their covenant?

DAY FIVE: Read Genesis 22:1-24.

15. a. What did God demand of Abraham concerning his son Isaac?

b. How did Abraham respond?
16. What was Abraham's answer to Isaac's question about the lamb for the sacrifice?
17. Describe the turn of events that followed.
18. What did the Lord swear to Himself because of Abraham's obedience?

DAY SIX: Read Genesis 23:1-20.

19. At what age and in what land did Sarah die?
20. a. Where did Abraham want to bury his wife?

b. How did his negotiations with Ephron turn out?
21. Describe the property in Canaan (the promised land) that became the possession of Abraham.