

BI 121 Old Testament

Lesson Bi121-9 Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18-19)

Abraham was God's friend. God did not want to hide from Abraham what He was going to do. So after announcing the coming birth of a son for Abraham and Sarah, the Angel of the Lord walked toward the city of Sodom. Turning to Abraham He said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so terrible! I am going to see for myself if what they have done is as bad as the report I have heard."

As Abraham and the Lord continued to talk, the other two men left them and walked toward Sodom. Abraham said, "Will you sweep away the righteous along with the wicked? Suppose there are 50 righteous people in the city. Will you destroy the place, knowing that the righteous will die along with the wicked? I do not believe you would do such a thing. Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

The Lord said, "If I find 50 righteous people in Sodom, then for their sakes I will spare the whole city."

Abraham thought for a moment and then said, "I realize now that I should not have been so bold for I am nothing but dust and ashes. But what if the number of the righteous is five less than 50? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five people?"

The Lord said, "I will not destroy the city if I find 45 righteous people there." So the discussion went from 45 to 40 to 30 and to 20. Each time the Lord agreed to his friend's intercession.

Finally Abraham asked, "Lord, I promise this is the last time I will talk to you about this. What if only 10 can be found there?"

"For the sake of 10, I will not destroy the city." With that, the conversation ended. The Angel of the Lord left and Abraham returned to his tent.

Sodom was the chief city of a fertile and well populated valley at the south end of the Dead Sea. Archaeologists who have explored the area say that the cities were all destroyed by fire about 4,000 years ago. In the time of Jesus, the ruins could still be seen partly covered by water, according to the account of an eyewitness named Josephus. Today the area is covered with several meters of water, a lake full of sulphur and salt; but nothing can live there.

In the early evening, the two angels in human form entered Sodom. They found Lot sitting at the city gate. The business of that time would sit at the gate and conduct business. Lot had great wealth and conducted much business in Sodom. As soon as he saw the angels, he bowed before them. "I am your servant. Please come to my house where you can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way."

“No, we will just spend the night here, in the square.” The angels replied.

“Oh, no, you must come with me right now.” Lot insisted as he led them to his house and prepared a meal for them. Later as they were getting ready for bed, a mob of men surrounded the house. They shouted, “Lot, bring out those men who came to your house so that we can have sex with them.”

Lot stepped outside and closed the door. “Please, friends, don’t do this wicked thing. These men are under the protection of my roof. Take my two daughters instead.” Lot was in a difficult position. His culture demanded that anyone who entered his home was under his protection. What could he do to dissuade this mob to keep his two guests safe?

The mob was getting angry. “Get out of our way! Who do you think you are, our judge? You are not even one of us. We’ll treat you worse than them!” With that, they rushed forward trying to push him aside to break down the door. At that moment, the angels reached out and pulled Lot back into the house. They slammed the door shut while striking all the men outside, young and old, with blindness so that they could not find the door.

The angels turned to Lot. “Do you have any relatives who are living in the city — sons, daughters, sons-in-law? Get them out of here. We are here to destroy this city!”

Lot rushed out to speak to his sons-in-law who were pledged to marry his daughters. “Wake up! Come with me! We have to get out! The Lord is about to destroy the city.” He insisted. But they all thought that he was just joking.

Lot had still not left the city in the morning as the sun was coming up. The angels urged, “Hurry! You and your family get out of here, or you will be killed in the judgment!”

Still, they hesitated and still the Lord was merciful to them. Finally, the angels took the hands of Lot, his wife and daughters and lead them safely out of the city. Once there, the angels shouted, “Run for your lives! Do not look back! Do not stop until you are in the mountains.”

“You have been kind to me but I cannot make it to the mountain.” Lot pleaded. “Please, let me go to the small town nearby and my life will be spared.”

The angel looked toward the distant town and he said, “Go and I will spare that town. But hurry! I cannot do anything until you are safe.” In this the Lord was showing mercy to Lot because of Abraham and his prayer.

The sun was fully up when Lot reached the little town. As soon as he was inside the town, the Lord brought down fire from heaven and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the other cities and vegetation on the plain, except for that one little town. Unfortunately, Lot’s wife turned to look back, disobeying the angel’s order. And she became a pillar of salt.

Early the next morning Abraham went out to the spot where God had talked with him and looked in the direction of Sodom. All he saw was dense smoke rising into the sky. God had

heard his prayer and delivered Lot and his two daughters, because of His grace, but He had followed through and had destroyed the cities.

After the destruction of Sodom, Lot and his two daughters soon left the little town and settled in the mountains in a cave. With all their possessions destroyed in God's judgment; all they had left was what they could carry. Lot, instead of being grateful for his deliverance and returning to his uncle Abraham, lived in fear in the cave. He refused to seek God or seek change from his hopeless situation.

These became desperate times for Lot and his two daughters. It was the tradition of the land that the children were to care for their parents as they aged. Thus it was the responsibility for Lot's daughters to care for him. But they had no husbands to work to provide food. And with all of their father's wealth gone they no longer had dowries to attract husbands. And to make matters worse, they had no children who would care for them when they became old. What were they to do?

Now most children would have thought that they should go to the very rich uncle, Abraham. He had the resources to help them find good husbands and money to help them restart their lives. But these two daughters had grown up in a wicked city. A place where sexual perversion was normal. Perhaps this is why they devised such a wicked solution to their problem.

So one day, they together devised an evil plan that came straight from the heart of Sodom. Lot's daughters had not only lived in Sodom, they had adopted the thinking of those evil people. One night they got their father to drink much wine until he was drunk. Then the eldest daughter slept with him. He was so drunk that he was not aware that he had had sex with his own daughter. The next night they got him drunk again and the younger daughter slept with him. In this way both daughters became pregnant.

They wanted to preserve their family line through their father, but this act of incest is against God's plan for the family. The older sister gave birth to a son who became the father of the Moabites. The younger sister gave birth to a son who became the father of the Ammonites. The descendants of these two sons became two nations. About 500 years later both tribes became great hindrances to the people of Israel as they tried to reach the land God had promised to Abraham. What is of even greater sadness is that although Lot knew God, and was even considered a righteous man who was deeply sorrowed by the sin of Sodom, there is not a single descendent of Lot recorded in the next 500 years of Bible history that knew God.

This story is important because it shows us that God displays both judgment and mercy on sinners. He knows what is happening in the world. Though Abraham tried to intercede for the lost souls of Sodom, God was just in judging them. God showed mercy in sparing Lot and his family, but even they suffered for the years of living in that sinful city.

The main truth of this story is God that delivers his people from judgment because of His great love for them, but He still expects them to be obedient to Him. Sin has consequences; even if not immediately seen, they will be experienced later.

To review this lesson, answer these questions.

1. What was the truth Abraham knew about God's character as judge?
 - A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, "Abraham said, 'Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?'" you are correct.
2. Why did God send the two angels to Sodom?
 - A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, "God sent them to destroy the city, because the sin there was so great," you are correct.
3. Why was Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt?
 - A. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, "She turned to look back, disobeying the angel's order," you are correct.

Your assignment for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened; see the events in your mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and retell it until you feel sure you are repeating the circumstances and actions correctly. You should spend at least 45 minutes in learning the story. You may need to have someone check that you are telling the story correctly

Ask a friend who has never heard this story to listen to it. Lot's wife could not decide whether to obey God's instructions or follow her own heart; to flee or to stay. Her indecision led to her death with the ungodly. Why do you think God allowed her to die? Jesus reminds us to remember Lot's wife (Luke 17:32). We must not let our heart be enticed by the world's pleasure or possessions for they can eventually lead us to death and destruction.