

Two Disturbing Episodes (Genesis 19:30-20:18)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Genesis

I. Recap from the Previous Lesson (More Lessons from Sodom & Gomorrah)

- a. **(Lesson #4B)** Don't fall into the sin of Sodom. In **Ezekiel 16**, it explains that the sin of Sodom that they were arrogant and self-indulgent, with no concern for the poor and needy. Following Jesus means taking up our cross and being willing to suffer. A life focused on love of pleasure will lead to our destruction. Take personal inventory, and repent.
- b. **(Lesson #5)** Don't mess with angels. Angels are powerful warriors in the spiritual battlefield. Only two took out Sodom, Gomorrah and that region. Yet **Hebrews 1:14** says that they are sent to minister to us, who will inherit salvation!
- c. **(Lesson #6)** Sodom may have foreshadowed the destruction of Jerusalem, about 40 years after Jesus was crucified and raised. Many parallels in the two accounts. Destruction of Jerusalem was prophesied by Jesus, and fulfilled by Titus in AD 70.

II. Overview of this Lesson: Two (of Three) Disturbing Short Stories

- a. Some might be inclined to skip ahead, after Sodom and Gomorrah, to **Genesis 22** (famous story of Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac). Famous example of faith, and foreshadowing of Jesus' sacrifice. Very relevant and significant for us; prominently mentioned in the New Testament.
- b. Also might want to skip ahead because these three stories are disturbing. Our heroes are doing some very disturbing things. Also, we may wonder why God did not intervene, why God did what He did here, or why these stories are even in Scripture.
 - i. Hopefully that will just prompt us to dig deeper!
 - ii. We may learn things about God; how He operates and sees things in ways differently than we do.
 - iii. One of these stories is critical to understanding a New Testament letter of Paul's letters that is often misapplied in Protestant circles today.
- c. This next section of the Genesis account presents us with three disturbing short stories, involving: incest, adultery/polyandry and child abandonment!
 - i. **First.** Two daughters of Lot have sexual relations with their father in a cave, at their initiative, and both conceive (**end of Genesis 19**).

- ii. **Second.** Abraham pretends that Sarah is just his sister (not his wife) and gives her to another man to marry (**Genesis 20**).
- iii. **Third.** Abraham sends his own son Ishmael and her mother Hagar away, out into the desert, where they almost die of dehydration. (first half of **Genesis 21**)

III. Lot's Daughters Give Birth to Moabites and Amorites (read **Genesis 19:30-38**)

- a. What can we possibly learn from this disturbing story? Paul tells us in **Romans 15:4** that "whatever things were written before were written for our learning". Must be something to learn here, too.
- b. Possible lesson: don't get drunk, even at the hands of someone you trust. Can lead to you doing something that will have enormous consequences for years to come!
- c. Another lesson (to help us understand what we are reading in the rest of the Old Testament): this is the origin of the Moabites and Ammonites.
 - i. I tend to mix up the Amorites and the Ammonites! (Almost as bad as recent feud within Boston-area regional discount supermarket chain owners Arthur T. DeMoulas and his cousin, Arthur S. DeMoulas)
 1. Amorites lived in Canaan; Abraham told in **Genesis 15:16-21** that 400 years hence, since "the sin of the Amorites is not yet filled up" his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan, where the Amorites and other nations dwelt. One of the first victories of the Israelites as they approached the Promised Land, was in defeating Sihon, king of the Amorites (**Deuteronomy 1:3-8**)
 2. Ammonites were descended from Lot via his younger daughter.
 3. Both groups had land east of the Jordan, in same general area. Israelites encountered both as they were entering the Promised Land.
 - a. Read **Deuteronomy 2:8-9; 2:16-19**. God had given land (an inheritance) to descendants of Esau (Edom, or Mount Seir), and to the descendants of Lot (Moab and Ammon). Israelites told not to take any of those lands.
 - b. Moses defeated Amorite kings Sihon and Og, and gave their land east of the Jordan to the tribes of Gad and Reuben, and to half of the tribe of Manasseh. (**Deuteronomy 2:24-3:20**)

- c. Confusion regarding the land of these two adjacent nations (with similar names) comes up again in **Judges 11**. The Ammonites (descended from Lot) attack Israel, and God raises up Jephthah as a 'judge' to lead Israel against them. Jephthah tries to explain to the Ammonites that Israel had taken the land of the Amorites, but not of the land of the Ammonites (adjacent and perhaps overlapping territorial claims). Jephthah then makes the unfortunate and famous vow if God will give him victory against the descendants of Lot.
4. Moabites were also a 'thorn in the flesh' of Israel.
 - a. After the Moabites saw how Israel had defeated Sihon and the Amorites (also in **Numbers 21**), they hired Balaam to curse the Israelites. (Read **Numbers 22:1-6**). Balak, who hired Balaam, was a Moabite king.
 - b. Read **Numbers 25:1-5**. The Moabites seduced Israelite men into sexual immorality and to worship their idols. Over 20,000 died in the resulting plague. Paul refers to this story as a warning to Christians, to stay out of immorality, in **1 Corinthians 10:1-13**.
 5. Yet something good did come out of this (largely) wicked nation.
 - a. Read **Ruth 1:1-5**. Ruth and Orpah were both Moabite women.
 - b. After Naomi sends her two daughters-in-law back to their own people (the Moabites), Ruth refuses to go back. Read **Ruth 1:15-18, 22**.
 - i. Ruth refuses to go back to the Moabites and to their gods. She replies to Naomi, "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God."
 - ii. Follows back to Bethlehem, and is rewarded for her faithfulness. Boaz blesses her. Read **Ruth 2:12** "...may a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."
 - iii. From her comes Obed, the grandfather of King David, from whom came all the kings of Judah, and from whom came Jesus. She is prominently mentioned in the lineage of Jesus in **Matthew 1**.

6. Lessons for Us

- a. #1 - Regardless of where we have come from, no matter how corrupt our depraved your background, if you come to God and make him your refuge, you can be grafted into the Kingdom of God and be used to accomplish tremendous things for God.
- b. #2 - The sovereignty of God.
 - i. God's sovereignty does NOT mean that he forces everyone to do exactly what He wants, regardless of their will (which would imply no free will on our part).
 - ii. God's sovereignty means that the Lord uses the sinful nations of the world, and even the sins of his people, to accomplish his own long-term objectives in the end. His greater purposes simply will not be thwarted. God uses it all for good.
 - iii. Examples:
 1. David's sin with Bathsheba, in **2 Samuel 11**, led to David marrying Bathsheba, mother of Solomon.
 2. Judah's sin with daughter-in-law Tamar in **Genesis 38** produces Perez, forerunner of David and Jesus.
 3. Lot's union with eldest daughter leads to the Moabites, from which Ruth comes (righteous woman, and direct ancestor of David and Jesus).

IV. **Abraham and Sarah with King Abimelech**

- a. Here we go again with another of Abraham's "she's my sister" situations. (Read **Genesis 20:1-7**)
- b. This reminds us of a similar episode in Egypt that we studied previously, in **Genesis 12:10-20**.
 - i. Think through the roles of all three people in this story. Who do you think God should have been upset with here? Who do you *really* think the Lord should have been visiting in a disturbing dream that night?
 1. Where was Abraham, whom Paul refers to as the 'father of faith' in **Romans 4**?

- a. He was afraid of a local pagan king.
 - b. Abandoned his wife to the king; lets that king take Sarah as his own wife!
 - c. Was deceptive, and directs his wife to do the same.
 - d. He had recently seen the incredible power of God destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, and heard from the Lord that he would have a son within the year through his wife Sarah. This is the father of faith?
2. Where was Sarah, who Peter holds up in **1 Peter 3** as the example for all wives?
- a. Peter was the one who said we must obey God rather than men, in **Acts 4:19**.
 - b. Shouldn't she have disobeyed her husband in this situation?
3. What did Abimelech do wrong, anyway? Why is God so hard on him?
- a. Lord opens with 'You are a dead man'.
 - b. King counters by saying, essentially, 'I'm innocent; I did not know; he and she both lied to me'.
- c. Trying to make sense of this story (Read **Genesis 20:8-18**)
- i. Abimelech was a godless, violent man in a nation that did not revere the Lord (if we trust Abraham's assessment).
 - ii. Abraham was God's friend, God's prophet.
 - iii. God takes care of the righteous.
 - 1. Read **Psalm 37:17-40**
 - a. David knew that God always protects his people, those who are devoted to living righteous lives. He drew great comfort from that.
 - 2. Jesus pointed to the same thing (don't worry; God will take care of us if we remain devoted to righteousness) in **Matthew 6:33**.
 - iv. Abraham certainly could have reasoned that this strategy worked out very well once before, in Egypt, in **Genesis 12:10-13:2**

1. Sarah was untouched.
 2. Abraham's life was spared.
 3. He became very wealthy in the process, too! (Pharaoh gave him sheep, cattle, servants, etc.)
- v. Sarah embodied exactly what Peter holds up. Read **Peter 3:1-6**.
1. She was held up as a very beautiful woman.
 2. She trusted in God.
 3. Obeyed and submitted to her husband.
 4. Did not give way to terror. (Think of Sarah's situation in this story, abandoned to the household of King Abimelech to be his wife!)

V. Take-Aways from this Lesson

- a. Two (of three) disturbing stories in this part of Genesis. Need to dig deeper in stories like this to make sense of them, to learn lessons that may apply to us, and to get better understanding of who God is and how he views us.
- b. Moabites and Ammonites came from the daughters of Lot having relations with their father.
 - i. These two nations would play significant roles in the story of God's people later on in the Old Testament.
 - ii. Even from a very corrupt nation (the Moabites), God can bring out a true gem, a great hero or heroine of faith (as in the case of Ruth). There is hope for each of us, regardless of the people or family we came from. We also learn that God is sovereign over all things, and can accomplish his purposes, even working through the sins of his people.
- c. God protects his people, those who are righteous. He protected Abraham and Sarah and got them out of a dangerous situation under Abimelech. That encounter can give us a greater appreciation for Sarah, who is held up as a challenging example for Christian wives in **1 Peter 3** for her true beauty, submission and for not giving way to fear.