

More Lessons from Sodom & Gomorrah (Genesis 19:29, continued)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Genesis

I. Recap from the Previous Lesson (on Destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah)

- a. **(Lesson #1)** Final judgment will come suddenly, by fire, and will catch many by surprise. Be prepared, heed the warnings. This is not a joke. **(Luke 17:26-30; 2 Peter 2:6; 2 Peter 3:1-7)**
- b. **(Lesson #2)** Take comfort that God can and will deliver the righteous from temptations, in the midst of a depraved world. He did that with Lot, and can do it for us as well. **(2 Peter 2:4-9)**
- c. **(Lesson #3)** Remember Lot's wife. She became a pillar of salt, a monument for us to learn from. Don't look back on the life of sin you left behind, and on the world that is headed for destruction. **(Luke 17:32-33)**
- d. **(Lesson #4A)** Don't repeat the sin of Sodom. Homosexual sexual relations are a serious sin, regardless of what the world and many churches may tell us today. Homosexuality is not a sign of progress and enlightenment, but rather a sign of regression to the lifestyles of the Canaanites and of Egypt, who God brought His judgment against during the time of Moses. Sodom's destruction was an example for us. **(Jude v.7)**

Also, we learn from the Scriptures that it is not our job to change the laws of the world. Christians live in a separate kingdom. Our job is to call people out of the kingdom of the world and into God's kingdom, not to try to force people in the world to live under the rules of God's kingdom.

II. Even More Lessons for Us in the Story of Sodom & Gomorrah

- a. **Lesson #4B – Don't repeat the sin of Sodom, 'Part B'**
 - i. Read **Ezekiel 16:44-50**. Ezekiel is writing during the time of the Jewish captivity.
 - ii. If you don't struggle with homosexual attraction, you are not 'off the hook' in the story of Sodom. Ezekiel convicts his Jewish brethren and us as well, regarding the true root sins that resulted in Sodom's depravity.
 - iii. Root problem of Sodom: arrogance, and living a life of self-indulgence. No concern for the poor and needy.

- iv. Living for personal pleasure: Food, drink, luxury, personal comfort, vacations, retirement and ease.
 - 1. Paul contrasts the godly Christian widow, who relies on the Lord, continues in prayer day and night and who has lived a life devoted to bringing up children, good works, washing the feet of the saints, taking care of the afflicted; versus the widow who lives for pleasure. He says “She who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.” (**1 Timothy 5:6**) He says that these people become idle, gossips and busybodies.
 - 2. Jesus warned his followers of the dangers of being choked out by pursuing pleasure, in the Parable of the Sower, in **Luke 8**. Jesus explains that the different soils represent four different types of hearts. Only the fourth is described as those having “a noble and good heart”.
 - a. Those represented by the first soil never believe.
 - b. Those of the second soil believe but have no root, who “believe for a while and in time of temptation they fall away” (**Luke 8:13**).
 - c. Regarding the third soil Jesus says, “Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.” (**Luke 8:14**)
 - i. Do you think of pleasure as dangerous to your soul?
- v. Pleasure itself is not necessarily bad. But it must not be the driver! Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215 AD) explained, “For pleasure is neither a function, nor a state, nor any part of us; but has been introduced into life as an auxiliary, as they say salt was to season food. [The picture: a little salt makes your food taste good, but we don’t eat a whole salt shaker of salt! Could die of salt poisoning!]

But *when it casts off restraint and rules the house*, it generates first unlawful desire for sexual pleasure, which is an irrational propension and impulse toward that which gratifies it; and it induced Epicurus to lay down pleasure as the aim of the philosopher.” (ANF v.2, p.373)

 - 1. Of course Clement is talking about Epicureanism, which is very much alive and well today, even within modern Protestant churches. (In Epicurean philosophy, the goal in life is to maximize pleasurable experiences. Not about total unrestraint as this would cause harm to oneself, such as a hangover the

next day if you get drunk. An Epicurean, therefore, would say some self-control is important, but ultimately, the goal is to maximize how much pleasure we can get.)

2. While many churches may reject the prosperity gospel, they allow Epicurean philosophy to creep in: become a Christian and you will have a better, happier life, a better family, a happier marriage, a nice secure future, etc. This completely contradicts what Jesus taught his followers!
 3. Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, *let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily*, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?" (**Luke 9:23-25**)
 4. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Enter by the narrow gate... narrow is the gate and *difficult is the way which leads to life*, and there are few who find it." (**Matthew 7:13-14**)
 5. The reality is that many who put Jesus' teachings into practice are going to bring great hardship, pain, and trouble into their lives – Jesus says to follow Him is to deny oneself, carry one's cross and take the difficult road. This might include having to quit a lucrative job that is displeasing to God, or even bring serious hardship to family relationships.
- vi. Ezekiel rebukes Israel because "they did not give a helping hand to the poor and needy." (**Ezekiel 16:49**) This is simply an extension of their pursuit of pleasure and self-indulgence.
1. Examine your life! (Since most people think 'I have a good heart', try to make an objective examination of yourself)
 2. Are we really putting into practice what Jesus called the second greatest commandment, namely to "love your neighbors as yourself"? (**Leviticus 19:18, Mark 12:31**)
 3. What did John the Baptist say? If you have two tunics and your friend has none, give him one of your tunics. (**Luke 3:11**)
 4. We all think we love other people, but James reminds us, using the example of helping those in need, that we show our faith by our works, by what we actually do rather than by what we simply feel or say (**James 2:14-18**). In this passage, James says if our brother is naked or destitute, we need to provide for him!

5. The acid test of our faith and love: what are we actually doing for others? Take inventory of your own life. What do you think about and look forward to? How to you spend the hours of your week? How do you spend your “free” time and discretionary money? Are you living for pleasure or are you living to please God?
6. Self-test: make two piles of money in your mind. First: the pleasure pile, for non-essentials (eating out, fancy food, vacations, entertainment, “feathering your own nest”). Then make another pile (helping those in need). Which pile is bigger? Would Ezekiel have called you “overfed and unconcerned” or “a sister of Sodom”?
7. How much of your time is spent in gratifying the flesh, in worldly entertainment? (TV, movies, worldly music, internet, games, spectator sports, even news). The world (and Satan) is trying to grab your mind, to indoctrinate you to be enslaved to seeking more and more pleasure, wealth, food, drink, entertainment, leisure, sexual gratification. Satan and the world want you to seek personal pleasure and harden your heart toward those who are suffering around you. Ezekiel says this is the road to Sodom.
8. Take inventory, be honest, ask those who know you, and repent of the sin of Sodom!

b. Lesson #5 – Don’t mess with angels

- i. Sodom & Gomorrah the first display of the supernatural power of angels.
- ii. Comparison: US government dropped MOAB – the Mother of All Bombs; first used in Afghanistan. Largest non-nuclear device.
 1. 11 tons; had to be delivered by cargo plane.
 2. Immediate blast radius about 150-200 yards.
 3. Impact within a radius of up to one mile.
- iii. Yet just two angels took out two cities and the surrounding area! Everything was destroyed.
- iv. Jesus told his disciples, as he was being captured in the Garden by Jewish force with clubs and swords, that he could pray to his Father and ask to have “more than 12 legions of angels” sent. (**Matthew 26:53**)

1. It has been said that one 'legion' in the Roman army consisted of around 5,000 soldiers. I have no idea how many angels in an *angelic legion*! Plus, Jesus said "more than" 12 legions of angels.
2. Think about it; Jesus could have taken out the entire Roman Empire with the forces at his disposal!
3. Can we ask God to send angels to fight our battles as well?
 - a. **Hebrews 1:14** says that angels are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who will inherit salvation".
 - b. In **Daniel 10:10-21** speaks of large scale spiritual warfare that angels are engaged in "the prince of the Persian kingdom withstood me 21 days, and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me."
 - c. Paul reminds us that "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (**Ephesians 6:12**) We are engaged in spiritual battle involving spiritual forces and spiritual weapons.
- v. Consider the modern popular fascination with superheroes and disaster movies today (comic books, movies, etc.).
 1. Popular themes: hidden supernatural powers, secret mission, rescue the 'good guys' who are in deep trouble, overcome / punish the overwhelming forces of evil. Are popular comic books and movies tapping into something deeper within us?
 2. Similar to sports and military/war reporting (shallow shadow of the greater war of which we long to be a part).
 3. The above are but a diversion! The real story and the real battle are much more compelling than the fictional ones created by Hollywood and the entertainment / sports industry. Unseen spiritual battle involving great forces, with immense stakes involved.
- c. **Lesson #6 – Sodom may have foreshadowed the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD**
 - i. Possible parallels between Sodom and Gomorrah and story of Passion of Jesus followed by destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70:

1. Evening meal in a home. (**Genesis 19:1-3; Matthew 26:17-26, John 13:1-17**)
 - a. Washing of the feet of guests
 - b. Unleavened bread eaten
 2. Wicked mob seeks violence done to the righteous. (**Genesis 19:4-11; Luke 23:18-25**)
 3. Two offered to the hostile crowd. (**Genesis 19:6-8; Matthew 27:15-26**)
 4. City where the crime was done ends up being destroyed. (**Genesis 19:12-26; Luke 21:20-24, Luke 23:28-31, Matthew 21:33-46**)
 - a. The righteous few are warned, and escape before the destruction takes place.
 - b. Prophecy of destruction of the wicked city offered shortly beforehand, but scoffers reject the warning.
 - c. Total devastation of the famous city, because of the crime perpetrated by the wicked crowd.
- ii. Jesus prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem
1. **Matthew 21:33-46.** Jesus tells the parable of the vineyard. Vineyard is Jerusalem. The tower is the temple. The servants are the prophets. The son is Jesus, who is seized and killed. God, the landowner, will “destroy those wicked men miserably.”
 2. **Luke 21:20-24.** Escape the city, which is about to be destroyed, run for your lives; flee to the mountains; don’t look back. (Jerusalem foreshadowed by Sodom; wicked city totally destroyed, a righteous few escape before it happens)
- iii. Prophecy of **Daniel 9:24-27** (Daniel in captivity around 600 BC)
1. Jerusalem would be rebuilt;
 2. Christ the Prince would come;
 3. The Christ would be put to death;
 4. The city and the temple would be destroyed by the prince to come; temple sacrifice would be put to an end.

- iv. Eusebius in Book 3, chapter 7 of *Ecclesiastical History* (c. 330-340 AD) recounts the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70:
1. “To these accounts (*of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70*) it may be proper to add the sure prediction of our Savior, in which he foretold these very events as follows: ‘But woe to them that are with child and those that give suck in those days; but pray that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the Sabbath. But there shall be then great distress, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither may be.’
 2. “The historian (*referring to Josephus*), adding up the whole number of those slain, says that eleven hundred thousand (*i.e. 1.1 million!*) perished by famine and the sword, and that the rest, the factious and robbers, mutually informing against each other after the capture, were put to death. Of the young men, the tallest, and those that were distinguished for beauty, were preserved for the triumph (*referring to the victory parade back to Rome; commemorated by the Arch of Titus*).
 3. “Of the remaining multitude, those above seventeen were sent as prisoners to labor at the mines in Egypt. But great numbers were distributed to the provinces, to be destroyed by the sword or wild beasts in the theatres. Those under seventeen were carried away to be sold as slaves. Of these alone, there were upwards of ninety thousand.
 4. “All this occurred in this manner, in the second year of the reign of Vespasian, according to the predictions of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who by his divine power foresaw all these things as if already present at the time, who wept and mourned indeed, at the prospect, as the holy evangelists show in their writings. These give us the very words he uttered, when he said to this same Jerusalem, ‘If thou didst know, even thou, in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace, but now are hidden from thy eyes, for the days will come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench around thee, and shall encompass thee around, and shall everywhere shut thee in, and they shall level thee and thy children with the ground.’
 5. “Afterwards he speaks as if of the people – ‘For there shall be great distress upon the earth, and wrath upon this people, and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and they shall be carried away captive to all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the nations, until the times of the nations shall be fulfilled.’ And again, ‘When ye shall see Jerusalem

surrounded by armies, then know that her desolation has drawn near'

6. "On comparing the declarations of our Savior with the other parts of the historian's work, where he describes the whole war, how can one fail to acknowledge and wonder at the truly divine and extraordinary foreknowledge and prediction of our Savior?"
7. "Concerning the events, then, that befell the Jews after our Savior's passion, and those outcries in which the multitude of the Jews refused the condemnation of a robber and murderer, but entreated that the Prince of Life should be destroyed, it is superfluous to add to the statement of the historian. Yet it may be proper to mention, also, what things occurred that show the benignity of that all-gracious Providence that had deferred their destruction for forty years after their crimes against the Christ."
 - v. (Eusebius also pointed out in chapter 5 of the same work that the Christians in Jerusalem, seeing signs of the impending destruction, abandoned Jerusalem and fled to Pella, across the Jordan, prior to Jerusalem's destruction.)
 - vi. Justin Martyr, in writing to the Romans in his First Apology (c. 160AD) said that the destruction of Jerusalem which had recently transpired was a fulfillment of prophecy. He reminded them that the Romans had completely devastated it, and any Jew caught entering it would be put to death. (*First Apology of Justin*, chapter 47; in ANF v.1, p.178)

III. Recap of This Lesson (More Lessons from Sodom & Gomorrah)

- a. **(Lesson #4B)** Don't fall into the sin of Sodom. In Ezekiel 16, it explains that the root sin of Sodom was 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. The destruction of Jerusalem was prophesied by Jesus, and fulfilled by Titus in AD 70.