

Destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah (Genesis 19:4-29)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Genesis

I. Recap from the Previous Lesson

- a. The Lord appeared in human form and visited Abraham in **Genesis 18**. Early Christians, who understood that it is impossible for someone to see God the Father, understood this to be referring to the Word of God (Son of God, who would later in the flesh become Jesus).
- b. Although Sarah laughed, she is held up as an example to women today in her submission and respect for Abraham, and her inner beauty.
- c. Abraham's boldness and humility in approaching God regarding something he was deeply concerned about is a good example for us.
- d. Lot and Abraham are examples of hospitality, likely what the Hebrews writer has in mind when he calls us to be hospitable, in view of the fact that some have "entertained angels unaware". You never know who that visiting Christian might really be.

II. Men of Sodom Threaten Abuse Lot's Visitors (Read Genesis 19:4-11)

- a. Sodom had become totally depraved. Mob of men from all over the city surround Lot's house and demand that he hand over his two guests "that we may have relations with them" (homosexual rape).
 - i. Lot courageously goes out to the mob by himself; shuts the door behind him. He tells the mob, "do not act wickedly" and then offers his two virgin daughters instead!
 - ii. I don't know what to do regarding how to view Lot's offer here. Very upsetting to think that a father would do that to his daughters instead of protecting them.
 - 1. Some claim that this reflects his knowledge that the mob had no interest in women, and was diversionary;
 - 2. Others suggest that this reflects the high standard of hospitality when a guest would come under your roof in ancient times in the Middle East; or a low view of women! (I don't know what to think!)
 - 3. Easy for people today to criticize Lot for settling in Sodom, and then offering his daughters. However, Lot is held up as a righteous man in the New Testament. (**2 Peter 2:7**)

- b. Crowd enraged by Lot's speech and offer. They accuse Lot of judging them. Then they threaten Lot, "Now we will deal worse with you than with them"! (Worse than gang raping the two angels.)
- c. Crowd presses upon Lot and approaches the house to smash down the door.
- d. Angels grab Lot, pull him inside, shut the door and strike the men outside the door with blindness.

III. The Escape from Sodom: Six People, Three Fates (Read Genesis 19:12-26)

- a. Lot warns his two sons in law (presumably engaged to be married) of the impending destruction of the city. However, they take what Lot is saying as a joke.
- b. Lot, his wife and his two daughters take the angels' warning seriously, and flee the city about to be destroyed.
- c. At dawn, they flee the city. Angels each grab one of their hands and essentially admonish the four to hurry, saying "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you... Escape to the mountains, lest you be overtaken."
- d. Lot is weary, the mountains are far; he asks to find refuge in a small city, Zoar. The angels agree to his request. Angels won't commence the destruction until Lot's family is safely in Zoar.
- e. With Lot and family in Zoar, as the sun rising, the Lord "rained fire and brimstone (= sulfur) on Sodom and Gomorrah out of heaven".
 - i. Both cities and the region of the plain wiped out.
 - ii. All inhabitants, even all plants destroyed.
 - iii. Much worse than US government's 'Mother of All Bombs' (their most destructive non-nuclear weapon)!
- f. Lot's wife, who looked back behind her "and she became a pillar of salt".

IV. Abraham Beholds Sodom (read Genesis 19:27-29)

- a. Abraham returns to the place where he had spoken with the Lord, and beholds flame and smoke ascending from Sodom and Gomorrah, as scene of complete destruction. What would he be thinking as he gazed and reflected on what had happened?
 - i. (This seems to be the first time Abraham saw supernatural sign from God of God's power.)
 - ii. Did he think, "So does that mean there *weren't even 10 righteous people* in that city? It was even worse there than I thought!"

- iii. Did he think, “I wonder what happened to my nephew Lot and his family?”
 - iv. Perhaps he thought, “When the Lord says something, he means it and it happens. He can do anything. Wait till I show this to Sarah. Maybe *then* she will believe that other thing the Lord promised (that we’d have a son within a year), which she laughed at! Nothing is impossible with the Lord.”
- b. Along with Abraham, let us pause to look down on the wreckage of what was once the thriving cities of Sodom and Gomorrah; see the destruction, flames and smoke; smell the burning sulfur; and reflect deeply on this. What is there *for us* to learn?
 - i. In **Romans 15:4**, Paul quotes from the Old Testament (**Psalms 69**) and remarks, “whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope.”
- c. **Lesson #1 – Take judgment warnings seriously. This is no joke. We must be prepared.**
 - i. God always keeps his promises. One of the most important of those is that there will be a Day of Judgment, and it will come suddenly and without further warning.
 - ii. God provides several stories early in the Bible to warn about the terrible last day, the Day of Judgment. In all cases, most were caught by surprise.
 - 1. Flood of Noah, in **Genesis 6-8** (only a few will be saved; they will be saved through water, this will happen suddenly).
 - 2. Sodom and Gomorrah, in **Genesis 19** (judgment will come by fire; only a few saved).
 - 3. Passover, in **Exodus 12** (death comes to all families except those protected by the blood of the Passover lamb).
 - 4. Jericho, in **Joshua 6** (will commence at the second coming of Jesus/Joshua; only a few saved; Rahab and her family were saved by the scarlet chord, which Justin Martyr and several other early Christians saw as foreshadowing the blood of Jesus).
 - iii. Read **2 Peter 3:1-14**

1. Scoffers will come in the last days, skeptical that there will be a Day of Judgment. (Lot's two sons-in-law thought it was a joke, like most of the world does, today.)
 2. The ultimate judgment will come by fire.
 3. It will come like a thief in the night; we must always be prepared.
 4. Be diligent to be found at peace, spotless and blameless.
- d. **Lesson #2 – Take comfort that even in a corrupt world headed for destruction, God can deliver the godly out of temptations.**
- i. **Read 2 Peter 2:4-9**
 1. While many modern preachers and teachers may criticize Lot for living in Sodom or offering up his daughters, Peter considers him an inspiring example for Christians, a man who remained righteous in the midst of a corrupt world.
 2. Three times, Peter refers to Lot as “righteous”
 3. From story of Sodom, Peter encourages us that the Lord has shown he can deliver the godly out of temptations while reserving judgment for a corrupt and depraved world.
 4. No matter how bad things get around us, we can have hope and confidence if we remain righteous.
 - ii. Jesus says in **John 10:28** that no one can snatch his sheep out of his hand. I think of Lot's family fleeing corrupt Sodom, with the angels grabbing a hand of each of them as they fled, bringing them to safety.
 1. Not a message of eternal security (once saved always saved). The angel held Lot's wife's hand, but she looked back and was lost! But the angels held the hand of the other three who did not look back, were righteous, and God was able to save them.
- e. **Lesson #3 – Remember Lot's wife.** (Read **Luke 17:26-33**)
- i. The pillar of salt was left as a monument for us, to teach us a lesson. Jesus said, “Remember Lot's wife.” (**Luke 17:32**)
 - ii. What is the lesson of Lot's wife?
 1. In **Luke 17:33** Jesus says, “Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it”.

2. Seems to me that the lesson is also, “Don’t look back!” Don’t look back longingly on the world that you are fleeing: its passing pleasures, its rewards, past sins (their rewards and glories). It is all going to burn up. Get out of Dodge and don’t look back at the old life you left behind in the world of sin!
 - a. Reminds me of what Jesus said in **Luke 9:62**, “No one, having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.”
 - b. In **Deuteronomy 17:16**, Moses warned that when the people had a king in the future, he must never “cause the people to return to Egypt; for the Lord said, ‘You shall not return that way again’”.
 - i. Egypt represented the land of bondage and enslavement (sin / the world) from which they escaped, through the water. Must not go back there (foreshadowing the lesson for us).

f. **Lesson #4 – Don’t fall into the sin of Sodom**

- i. What I am about to say may be labeled ‘hate speech’ and become against the law here (Boston) or other places in the future. So best to say it now.
- ii. While teaching through Genesis to a large group of college campus students over 10 years ago, and the room went dead silent. Everyone knew the answer, but no one wanted to say it (fear of being labeled as bigoted, intolerant, and unenlightened). Even then, they were getting indoctrinated with an obvious agenda in many programs at their schools, and it has gotten much worse on the campuses!
- iii. More and more churches have abandoned what the Bible teaches on this, and come up with fine-sounding scholarly explanations to explain why homosexual sex is not a sin. They claim this command was culturally-based. Also, pressure mounting to label teaching this as hate speech, similar to anti-Jewish or segregationist attitudes that were shamefully tolerated in some Christian circles in the past.

1. Read **2 Timothy 4:2-5**

- a. Paul warned Timothy to preach the word at all times (when the teaching is popular and when it is unpopular).
- b. Be prepared at all times, in all circumstances. No compromise. The call for all preachers for all time.

- c. Don't be surprised when we see teachers rising up to tell people what their itching ears want to hear.
 - 2. In **2 Peter 2:1-2**, Peter warns the Christians, "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies...and many will follow their destructive ways".
 - a. Later in the same chapter, Peter ties these false teachers to lust, sexual sins and corruption.
- iv. At the same time, many conservative Protestant churches do not grasp the concept of two separate kingdoms (world and kingdom of God).
 - 1. These churches have made things worse by trying to force the government to legislate against this, to fight in the political arena. They are attempting to make the U.S. 'a holy nation', which of course is impossible, a fool's crusade. This will only degrade the church by entangling the church in politics and trying to mix the Kingdom of God with the kingdoms of this world.
 - 2. There is also rampant hypocrisy in trying to enforce teaching on homosexuality while turning a blind eye to remarriage after divorce, which is an epidemic in so-called conservative Bible-believing churches in the Protestant world.
- v. Sexual perversion / homosexual sex
 - 1. Overview of Old Testament Law regarding sexual morals
 - a. No adultery (although men could have more than one wife); seventh commandment. (**Exodus 20:14**).
 - b. Can't covet your neighbor's wife; tenth commandment. (**Exodus 20:17**).
 - c. Remarriage after divorce permitted, with certain restrictions. (**Deuteronomy 24:1-4**)
 - d. **Leviticus 18** 'Don't adopt way of life in Egypt where you came from, nor from Canaan where you are going'. (**Leviticus 18:1-5**)
 - i. No incest. Can't have relations with brother, sister or other close relatives. (**Leviticus 18:6-18**)

- ii. No homosexual relations. “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.” **(Leviticus 18:22)**
 - iii. No relations with animals. “Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion.” **(Leviticus 18:23)**
 - iv. The land of Canaan has been defiled by these things; that’s why I cast those people out. Don’t become defiled in the same way. **(Leviticus 18:24-30)**
 - 1. Recall that the Lord had told Abraham that his descendants would return to inherit Canaan only after 400 years, because “for the sin of the Amorites is not yet filled up”. **(Genesis 15:16)**
- 2. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tightened the laws on sexual purity for those who want to be part of his kingdom; he did not loosen them.
 - a. Lusting after a woman is committing adultery in one’s heart. **(Matthew 5:27-30)**
 - b. Divorce is now restricted to the case of adultery, and cannot remarry after divorce while spouse is still alive. **(Matthew 5:31-32)**
- 3. Peter goes back to the book of Leviticus to call Christians to live a holy life. He says, “as obedient children, *not conforming yourselves to the former lusts*, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’” **(1 Peter 1:14-16;** where Peter’s quote from the OT corresponds to **Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:22 and 20:7)**
- 4. Read **Jude v. 5-7**
 - a. Sodom and Gomorrah, given over to sexual immorality and having “gone after strange flesh” are set as an example, “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”
 - b. Clearly Jude considered homosexual sexual relations to be a serious sin.
- 5. Read **Romans 1:22-32**

- a. The depravity of mankind starts with idolatry, rejecting the Creator.
 - b. Leads to all kinds of shameful conduct, including homosexual acts (men with men; women with women).
 - c. Ultimately degenerates to all kinds of sins.
 - d. “[T]hose who practice such things are deserving of death....” (**Romans 1:32**)
6. While modern world sees acceptance of homosexuality as progress, moving forward...according to the word of God it is moving downward, backward, degrading; back to the practices of Egypt, Amorites, and Sodom.
7. Read **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**
 - a. The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom
 - b. Do not be deceived!
 - c. Neither fornicators...adulterers...homosexuals (catamites)...sodomites...will inherit the kingdom of God
 - d. Such were some of you (Corinthian Christians had come out of those backgrounds)
 - e. But you were washed, sanctified, justified in the name of Jesus and by the Spirit of God (hope for all!)
 - i. Homosexuality was completely acceptable in ancient Greece. Yet people in the Corinthian church repented of this sin.
 - ii. We have no business looking down on anyone with this background. We have all been washed, cleansed, forgiven of all types of past sin. But there must be repentance.
- vi. Early Christian writer Aristides, a converted Greek philosopher from Athens wrote in *The Apology of Aristides* (c. 125 AD):
 1. “The Greeks, O King, follow debased practices in intercourse with males, or with mothers, sisters and daughters. Yet they, in turn, impute their monstrous impurity to the Christians.” (As quoted in *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, ed. David Bercot, article on Homosexuality; original from *The Apology of Aristides*, ANF v.9. p.279)

vii. From *The Book of Laws of the Various Countries* attributed to Bardesanes (154-222 AD):

1. "And what shall we say of the new race of us Christians, whom Christ at his advent planted in every country and in every region? For lo! Wherever we are, we are called after the one name of Christ – Christians. On one day, the first of the week we assemble ourselves together, and on the days of the readings we abstain from taking sustenance. The brethren who are in Gaul do not take males for wives [note: Gaul corresponds to modern-day France], nor those who are in Parthia two wives; nor do those who are in Judea circumcise themselves; nor do our sisters who are among the Geli consort with strangers; nor do those brethren who are in Persia take their daughters for wives; nor do those in Media abandon their dead, or bury them alive or give them as food to the dogs; nor do those who are in Edessa kill their wives or their sisters when they commit impurity, but they withdraw from them and give them over to the judgment of God; nor do those in Hatra stone thieves to death; but wherever they are, and in whatever place they are found, the laws of the several countries do not hinder them from obeying the law of their Sovereign, Christ; nor does the Fate of the celestial Governors compel them to make use of things which they regard as impure." (ANF v.8, p.733)
2. The early Christians realized there were two kingdoms. No matter what nation they were part of, they were loyal to King Jesus, and subject to the rules and laws of the Kingdom of God. This included Jesus' commands on sexual purity.

V. Recap of This Lesson – Four Lessons from Sodom & Gomorrah

- a. Final judgment will come suddenly, by fire, and will catch many by surprised. Be prepared, heed the warnings. This is not a joke.
- b. Take comfort that God can 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.
- c. Remember Lot's wife. Don't look back on the life of sin you left behind, and on the world that is headed for destruction.
- d. Homosexual sexual relations are a serious sin, regardless of what the world and many churches may tell us today. Sodom's destruction was an example for us.