

GENESIS 19 — **THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH**

A. The two angels come to Sodom and

1. (1-3) Lot convinces the angelic visitors to stay with him.

Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. And he said, "Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." And they said, "No, but we will spend the night in the open square." But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

a. **Now the two angels came to Sodom:** The two visitors that departed from Abraham in Genesis 18:22 while he and the LORD continued their conversation arrived **at Sodom**. For the first time they are identified as angelic beings, who first accompanied the LORD as He visited Abraham at Mamre (Genesis 18:1-2).

i. We have no reason to believe that Lot *knew* that these guys were **angels**; to him, they probably seemed to be distinguished guests with an air of righteousness and morality about them. On the same thinking though, Abraham may have known they were angels. The text just doesn't say one way or the other.

b. **Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom:** There was a steady progression of compromise in Lot's life. He went from looking toward Sodom in Genesis 13:10, to pitching his tent toward Sodom in Genesis 13:12, to living in Sodom in Genesis 14:12, and losing everything when Sodom was attacked. Now, back at the infamous city, Lot sat in **the gate of Sodom**, this is an indication he was a civic leader.

i. The **gate** area of an ancient city was sort of a town-hall where the important men of the city judged disputes, conferred

with one another, and supervised those who entered and left the city.

c. **He insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house:** The hospitality Lot offered to the visitors was not unusual, but the urgency with which he offered it was.

2. (4-5) Next we really see The wickedness and depravity of the men of Sodom.

Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally."

a. **Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us:** These citizens of Sodom clearly came to homosexually abuse and rape these two visitors. They were willing to break all principles of hospitality and morality for their own violent and sexual gratification. It really doesn't matter what gender these angels were the men of the town wanted to take advantage of them, to rape them. Sin is a funny thing, it takes away all concepts of right and wrong.

b. **The men of the city... both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house:** This shows that *the entire city* was given over to this violence and immorality, and that this behavior wasn't unusual, but totally accepted among **the men of Sodom**.

i. In Ezekiel 16, God later condemned and rebuked the great sin of Judah in the latter days of the divided monarchy. He compared Jerusalem to the ancient city of Sodom, saying they were like sisters. Then, God compared the sins of Sodom to the sins of Jerusalem at that time: ***Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit (Ezekiel 16:49-50).***

ii. The point of the Ezekiel passage was not to say that the *only* sins of Sodom that made them targets of judgment were the sins of pride, idleness, injustice to the poor, and such. Instead, those were the sins of Sodom also shared by her later "sister" Jerusalem. The Genesis text makes it plain that God was also grieved by their sexual violence and immorality, which is probably included in the Ezekiel list of sins under the words *committed abomination*.

- b. **That we may know them carnally**: The sin of the men of Sodom was plainly connected to their sexual immorality.

Now we come to a controversial part of the story.

There is no doubt the Bible declares homosexual conduct is sin in Romans 1:26-28.

Both the Old Testament in Leviticus 18:22, 20:13 and the New Testament in Romans 1:26-28) condemn homosexual conduct. *Jesus Himself* affirmed the Old Testament's condemnation of homosexual conduct when He said, *do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill* that's from Matthew 5:17. Jesus also affirmed the Biblical ideal of marriage consisting of one man and one woman joined in a life-long relationship in Matthew 19:4-6. Contemporary interpretations make different conclusions in some scholars eyes. We need to work out for ourselves what the implications of these passages are.

The debate and discussion on these issues is ongoing and definitely divisive. It is difficult to preach a sermon on the topic without upsetting someone. What we are looking at in this passage is just the record that God gave us. So, let's react to that.

The men of the city wanted to abuse the visitors. They wanted to ignore the socially accepted norms and bypass what was accepted by the then society. The men of Sodom were wrong. Lot knew this would happen, remember, he wanted to hustle them into his house. He knew the locals.

Regardless of whether you think this is about the wrong of homosexuality or of the abuse of one's rights, this attitude which lead to these actions is wrong. Sinful if you want to use

that term. So wrong, God is reacting to it in a big way. He is going to wipe them out for the wrongs. Reacting in such a way that he cut off the influence of these people and this event has become known as the metaphor for sexual and moral debasity.

3. (6-9) Next Lot bargains for the life and safety of his guests.

So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, and said, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof." And they said, "Stand back!" Then they said, "This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them." So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door.

a. **Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly:** This was a difficult argument for Lot to make. He and the men of Sodom had a completely different standard for deciding what was wicked and what was not. The men of Sodom thought they were pursuing pleasure, and they did not care that Lot thought it was wicked. That is part of the problem in present debates about moral behaviour. People have differing personal standards. People have differing theological interpretations so there are many views. What we are talking about here is how God reacted the treatment of others.

The difference in their standards points to an important question: If we abandon the Bible's guide for sexual morality, what guide for sexual morality will we follow? To simply do as one pleases is not enough.

But listen to Lot's solution!!!

- c. **I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish:**

Lot's offer to the mob was horrible and cannot be justified. The men of Sodom showed a shocking demonstration of depravity, but we are just as shocked at the willingness of Lot to give up his daughters to the mob as we are at the sinful desire of the mob itself.

We understand this terrible description a *little* more when we consider the low place of women in the pre-Christian world and the very high place of any guest in one's home. Under the sacred obligations of hospitality, it was often understood that a guest was to be protected more than one's own family. Our contemporary standards of behaviour set the bar much higher. Thankfully.

- c. **This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting like a judge:** The men of Sodom mocked Lot, and they rejected his feeble efforts to provide any form of moral and spiritual standard.

4. (10-11) But there is **Angelic protection at the door.**

But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door.

a. **The men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door:** It must have taken great, perhaps supernatural, strength to do what the angels did at the door. Perhaps for the first time, Lot began to understand that his guests were more than men.

b. **They struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness:** Obviously, the work of striking the men blind was supernatural. Now, the mob had a physical blindness that matched their moral blindness.

B. The angels' deliverance of Lot.

1. (12-14) **The angels warn Lot; Lot warns his family.**

Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take them out of this place! For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it." So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.

a. **Have you anyone else here:** The angels were not *omniscient*, they didn't know everything. Knowing the number and location of the members of Lot's family was something that spiritual beings could easily observe, but at this point even these angels did not know it apart from Lot's answer.

i. Spurgeon saw something instructive in the angels' question, "**have you anyone else here?**" "The question shows the concern we should have for the salvation of not only ourselves, but our whole house."

b. **To his sons-in-law:** Lot's daughters were unmarried and had not known a man (Genesis 19:8). These men were **sons-in-law** by the ancient practice of binding betrothal, not yet by marriage.

c. **We will destroy this place... the LORD has sent us to destroy it:** For the first time, Lot heard of the work of these supernatural guests – **to destroy** Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom was destined for judgment, but God wanted to spare Lot and his family.

d. **He seemed to be joking:** This was the clear effect of Lot's life of compromise. When he spoke with utmost seriousness to his sons-in-law about the judgment of God, they did not believe him. Not even *they* would be saved from the judgment to come. Isn't this like our communities modern day reaction to the salvation story.

2. (15-16) The angels try to hurry Lot and his family.

When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the

punishment of the city.” And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.

a. **Arise, take your wife and your two daughters:** There was now no mention of the two sons-in-law. They would be left behind as **the angels urged Lot** to escape the coming destruction and judgment on Sodom.

i. In their urging of Lot, we see that these angels may serve as a pattern of evangelism.

- They went after Lot, going to him and his house.
- They warned him of what was going to happen, and in plain words.
- They **urged Lot**, urging him to flee destruction.

Notice the term : **While he lingered: Too** much of Lot’s heart was in Sodom, so he did not have an urgency to leave the city. A lack of *urgency* to obey God (even when it is necessary and good) is a common sign of compromise and a backslidden condition.

i. **The men took hold of his hand:** “I thought, as I read my text, that it gave us a striking example of doing all we can. Lot and his wife, and the two daughters—well, that was four—the angels had only four hands, so they did all that they could—there was a hand for each. You notice the text expressly says, they took hold of the hand of Lot, and the hand of his wife, and the hand of his two daughters. There were no more persons, and no more helping hands, so that there was just enough instrumentality, but there was not a hand to spare” (Spurgeon).

c. **They brought him out and set him outside the city:** In Genesis 18, Abraham asked God to spare the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah if there were ten righteous found there. Because there were not ten righteous people, God did not spare the city, but He still answered the *heart* of Abraham’s prayer by bringing Lot and his family out of Sodom, even if it was almost against Lot’s will.

Lot was in the worst of all possible places. He had too much of the world to be happy in the LORD, and too much of the LORD to be happy in the world.

3. (17-22) **The escape from Sodom.**

So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed." Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords! Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die. See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live." And he said to him, "See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

- a. **Escape for your life! Do not look behind you:** The angels seemed far more urgent to rescue Lot and his family than they were to be rescued. This is strange, but common in spiritual things.
- b. **Please, no, my lords:** Lot seemed pathetic and whimpering in his prayer, especially in contrast to the bold intercession of Abraham in [Genesis 18](#).

C.

1. (23-26) **The cities destroyed, and Lot's wife is turned to a pillar of salt.**

The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

- a. **Then the LORD:** As the angel said in [Genesis 19:22](#), judgment could not come upon Sodom and Gomorrah until Lot and his family were safe in Zoar; otherwise, it would violate God's promise to Abraham, at least in principle.

b. **Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah:** These cities were judged completely and severely, but only after God confirmed their great wickedness and gave them a righteous witness in Lot. (Spurgeon) But was he righteous?)

i. Today, some think these cities are buried under the Dead Sea, and their complete destruction is a testament to God's judgment and grace in delivering His righteous people.

ii. Before this destruction, the area of Sodom was unbelievably beautiful and productive, *like the garden of the LORD* (Genesis 13:10). Yet this great privilege and blessing did not turn their hearts toward God.

iii. As well, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah saw more of the power, grace, and mercy of God than any of the other people of the region. They had been delivered from ruin by God's work through Abraham. They heard the testimony from Melchizedek and saw the example of Melchizedek and Abraham. They had great blessing and great evidence of God's care for them, yet they rejected it all. (Sounds like modern society!)

c. **But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt:** Lot's wife was turned to a pillar of salt because she **looked back behind**, after the angels had specifically warned, *do not look behind you* (Genesis 19:17). Some think she lingered behind and was caught up in the cataclysm somehow, but it was probably a unique judgment of God on her for the state of her heart. Her looking back likely showed a love for Sodom and regret for its destruction.

i. "The word *looked back* has the connotation of *looking intently*. It might possibly be rendered *lagged back*, or maybe even *returned back*." (Morris)

So often we want to return to some of the things in our life which are where they should be – in the past. Sometimes we even long to return to them. Lot is given another chance, so was his wife but the past was too big for her.

2. (27-29) Abraham learns of Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction.

And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace. And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.

a. **Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD:** We sense that Abraham, with deeply moved memory of the previous day, wanted to remember his meeting with God.

b. **He saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace:** When Abraham saw the smoke of the cities and their destruction, he knew that his request was answered. God delivered Lot before the destruction came.

i. **He saw:** Spurgeon used these verses to think about what emotions are appropriate for the believer as they look upon God's judgment on the wicked.

- They should have a humble submission to God's will.
- They should have a deep sense of gratitude for their rescue.
- They should have an increased watchfulness over their own life.
- They should remember the great evil of sin.

For all the controversy that could come from the topics in this passage we see the message of God rescuing people. God is still in the rescue business. Where does it put us on our journey with God?