

THE ORIGINS OF IT ALL!: A STUDY OF GENESIS

XXIII.) THE THREAT OF IMMORALITY

GENESIS 19

Q: “In the world, not of the world,” what does this really mean?

Q: How is a believer to live and interact in this corrupt world?

a.) Where is the 'line' between being a citizen of this world and a citizen of God's Kingdom?

b.) Between reasonable accommodation and godly separation?

c.) Between enjoying the world that God placed us in and hating it for being a corrupt distortion of what it should and could be?

A.) THE EXAMINATION (vv. 1-12)

1.) Righteous Hospitality (vv. 1-3)

- Notice that immediately upon seeing the Messengers, Lot goes out of his way not only to greet them but to personally offer righteous hospitality.
- Knowing the dangers and wickedness of his city and its denizens, Lot insists that they stay with him in his house, immediately ushers them in, and then personally prepares a meal featuring “*unleavened bread*.”
- This is the first time “leaven” is mentioned in the Bible, the next occurrence is in Exodus 12 in reference to the preparations for the Passover. Consistently, throughout Scripture (and beginning here), “leaven” is used as a symbol for sin and corruption. Lot's specific use of “unleavened bread” here indicates an intentional desire for a 'pure' spiritual fellowship with these visitors even in the midst of the corrupt society outside and all around. Perhaps, then, Lot at least suspected the true nature of his visitors?
- It may also be significant that it was Lot, and *not* his wife, who prepared the meal. This may be a first hint that his wife does not approve of his showing hospitality to these visitors.
- Thus, the hospitality of Lot here is recorded in Scripture as “righteous,” just as Abraham's earlier hospitality with them. While Lot is most often thought of as a 'villain' in Scriptures, be careful to note that he is both here and elsewhere described as a genuine believer and worshiper of the LORD to whom is credited “righteousness.” **2 Peter 2:8**
- And yet, Lot is also a stark and tragic example of a compromising believer who is greatly attracted by the wicked world and willfully slides down its slippery slope. Remember, Lot's involvement here began with his first pitching his tent just outside Sodom (Gen. 13:12), then he

moved into the city itself (Gen. 14:12), and now even sits at the city's gates (Gen. 19:1) presumably as some sort of elder, magistrate or great friend of such. *A man who at one point had experienced the presence, provision and miracles of God has become 'right at home' in one of the most immoral and vile societies ever. He apparently did not directly believe or participate in their wickedness and maintained his own belief in God, but at the same time became quite comfortable among the wicked.*

2.) **Wicked** Neighbors (vv. 4-5)

- The utter extent of the people's wickedness and rebellion against God's will is quickly made clear.
- The people come at night, because the wicked love the darkness.
- “**both young and old**” Immorality has infected the whole society and is being passed from generation to generation.

3.) **Failed** Compromise (vv. 6-9)

- Lot may have been a believer, but he was also a compromising hypocrite and coward!
- He pleaded for the visitors and even put his own body (and life) at risk for their sakes. Yet, he did not hesitate to offer the defilement and abuse of his own daughters as an alternative.
- On the other hand, the fact that his two unmarried daughters were still virgins despite living in this wicked city, would seem to indicate that Lot still had at least some influence over his family and among the community – *up to a point*. He maintained at least some righteous standards and taught them to his family, yet was willing to compromise them under pressure.
- All of this time prior, Lot felt that surely his long list of past compromises and relationships resulted in his being accepted in this city as 'one of them' in spite of his faith in the LORD. Yet, when it came down to it, he quickly learned he was never really accepted. He's still just a 'foreigner' who has no right to 'judge' because his accommodations prevented him from earning that right or respect.

4.) **Heavenly** Help (vv. 10-12)

- Still, the messengers of the merciful LORD intervened on his behalf to rescue Lot and his family from the immoral mob. Why? Abraham's intercession, Lot's faith (weak and compromised as it was).
- The word used here for “**blindness**” refers to a typical kind of blindness that is only used one other time in Scripture (2 Kings 6:18) and refers not so much to a loss of physical sight as a blindness of confusion.

B.) **THE JUDGEMENT** (vv. 13-14)

- Based on the overwhelming evidence, a final judgment is declared.
- Still, Lot – and by extension his family – are given an opportunity to escape.
- The record of the reaction to this opportunity is **terribly tragic on at least 2 counts**.
- **First**, notice while Lot went to warn his daughters and sons-in-law, there is no indication of his making any effort to warn his own sons. Presumably, he didn't bother because he considered them to be already too much a part of the immoral culture and beyond 'saving.' A sad commentary on the risks we can put our children in with the decisions of association we make (community, school, playmates, clubs and activities, etc.).

- **Second**, when Lot tells his sons-in-law they laugh and mock him. They could not take seriously the words of warning from a man who so poorly lived and represented his faith and LORD.

C.) THE **HESITATION TO FORSAKE** THE WORLD (vv. 15-26)

1.) The Need To Be **Dragged** (vv. 15-16)

- Sodom, it's allures and culture, had become so much a part of Lot, his identity and security that even with such proof of it's wickedness and certainty of its judgment and destruction from God, Lot found it very difficult to truly leave it behind.
- So much so, in fact, that the angels had to physically drag him, his wife, and his daughters away from the destruction!

2.) Another **Compromise** (vv. 17-22)

- And STILL, his identification with and love for this world in which he lived would not let go. In the face of such judgment, destruction, and intervention, he is (even if reluctantly) willing to give up some of this life.
- But not all of it! *“I'll give up the big town, but at least let me continue on in the little town.” “I'll give up some, but don't make me give up all of it.” “I'll run, but only so far.” “I'll trust in God to deliver us from this catastrophe, but I still only trust the people, culture, and lifestyle I've become accustomed to for my survival.”*
- In grace (and perhaps an eye toward an object lesson), the angel concedes but notes the significance with the re-naming of the town as “Little” for the man of little faith who insisted on holding on to at least a little of the world and his former life even with full knowledge of the standards and judgments of the LORD!

3.) Deadly **Longing** (vv. 23-26)

- As much as Lot struggled with leaving the world and it's allures behind, his wife struggled even more.
- Despite all of the warnings, all of the grace-filled accommodations, and all the destruction apparent around them (and, thus, the harsh reality of God's judgment of the wicked), Lot's wife could not help but to turn and gaze back at her beloved world. The connotation here is not just a looking back of curiosity or even horror, but with longing and regret about leaving and it's destruction.
- **Luke 17:32-33**
- *The consequences were deadly: a monument to disobedience and worldly lust.*

D.) THE LORD IS **JUST & FAITHFUL** (vv. 27-29)

1.) **Just**

- The cities received what they justly deserved.

2.) **Faithful**

- The LORD proved faithful to His promises to Abraham in sparing the 'righteous' Lot and his daughters with him. **2 Peter 2:7-8**

- Lot was made “righteous” by grace through faith.
- Yet, he remained weak in obedience, commitment and holy separation.

E.) THE LINGERING TAIN OF CORRUPTION (vv. 30-38)

- Notice that their dwelling in Zoar did not last long. Zoar was geographically in the middle of the destruction all around it and a society no different in character than the others. I'm sure they were not too happy to receive Lot and his daughters either.
- So, they do end up living alone in the caves of the mountains.
- With the exception of the small town of Zoar, the wicked society they once lived in has been utterly destroyed. They have run far from where they once lived and live in isolation. And, **yet, the taint of their years of corruption lingers!**
- This is especially true in the case of Lot's daughters, who were raised within this culture and largely 'of' it. **NOTE: the culture in which they were raised corrupted Lot's daughters in spite of their father's faith and imputed righteousness!** *Environment DOES count, even for Christians. What environment do we allow our children to be exposed to, even expect them to accommodate to? Especially our school systems these days!*
- It is also tragically interesting that despite losing all of their possessions and fleeing to the mountains with practically nothing, they still managed to be sure to bring a stock of wine along with them!
- From there, the daughters – raised in the environment they were – decided that the only way to preserve their family line was through immoral and deceptive forced incest with their own father in his old age. Apparently, the idea of trusting in the LORD never even occurred to them).
- Sodom the city had been completely destroyed, as well as the other similar major cities. Lot and his daughters ran far away, hid and isolated from that place. Yet, the mentality and corruption of Sodom remained with them!
- By the way, don't miss two important points about the heritage of these two children.
- One, the Moabites and Ammonites have been and continue to be enemies of Israel and one with the Arabs.
- Two, yet Jesus the Christ had both a Moabite (Ruth) and Ammonite (Naamah, the mother of King Rehoboam) ancestors.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

Q: How did Abraham & Lot differ in their response to the questions we started with?

Q: How can we directly and specifically apply these lessons to our own lives and circumstances today?

Luke 17:32