



# BEGINNINGS

## A Study of the Book of Genesis

Sanctuary Bible Studies – Woodbury Lutheran Church

### Session 15, “Here Today, Gone Gomorrah” (Genesis 19)

Chapter 18 ended with Abraham pleading for the LORD to spare Sodom and Gomorrah, the home of his nephew, Lot, if just ten righteous people could be found there. That interchange not only shows the power of prayer offered from a platform of faith but also raises the issue of God’s mercy in the face of evil. The issue is not only God sparing the cities but also how merciful God will be in holding back His judgment while righteous Lot seeks to affect Sodom for the good. In this chapter we’ll see Lot’s failure to transform an evil culture, and his wife’s inability to let it go.

Sodom and Gomorrah were among five cities on the southern plain of the Dead Sea. The cities spanned a distance of 20 miles. Each was located near a wadi (desert stream). Archaeological/geological evidence shows that these cities were destroyed by earthquake and fire, leaving deposits of sulfur and asphalt.

#### 1. HOSPITALITY GONE BAD (19:1-11)

Contrasted here are the splendid hospitality of Lot and the attempted violent homosexual attack of the Sodomites on the same two strangers.

- Vs. 1: Note that Lot is “sitting in the gateway of the city,” a phrase that likely shows him to be a leader and judge of his city.
- Vss. 2-4: Lot welcomes the same two angel visitors (minus the LORD) we met in Chapter 18. His language, behavior, generosity, and insistence all reveal his hospitality. The angels are there to investigate Sodom. God already knew how bad Sodom was, but the investigation shows that His judgment is never capricious.
- Vss. 4-5: Contrasting Lot’s hospitality is the lust and mob attack of the city’s men (“all” of them, “young and old”), who demand sexual relations with the visitors. Their demand for homosexual relations and abuse not breaks not only the rules of hospitality but also God’s design for human sexuality later revealed in the laws given to Moses (Leviticus 18:22; see also Romans 1:21, 26-27).
- Vss. 6-8: Lot’s compromising nature comes through as he shuts the door behind him to negotiate with the mob. Lot maintains his commitment to hospitality toward the strangers, which now meant protecting them. Amazingly he offers the mob his own engaged daughters for a gang-rape.
- Vss. 9-11: Relentless the crowd calls Lot a “ger,” or resident alien and presses him against the door. Lot is saved by the angels who drag him indoors and strike the men blind so that they can’t even find the door.

#### 2. NO LAUGHING MATTER (19:12-14)

The two angel visitors tell Lot to assemble his family and escape the destruction to come. His two sons-in-law (engaged) refuse to go, believing that Lot “was joking” (vs. 14). Their attitude reveals the loss of Lot’s moral credibility. They would perish with the rest of the city. On Lot’s “righteousness” see 2 Peter 2:6-9.

### 3. RUN FOR YOUR LIFE AND DON'T LOOK BACK! (19:15-29)

- Vss. 15-16: The angels literally drag a hesitant Lot, his wife, and their two daughters out of Sodom. The number "10" in Chapter 18 is actually now down to "4." Note how God's mercy is emphasized.

*If you had to choose one word to describe the nature of God, what word would you choose? All-powerful? All-knowing? Forgiving? Gracious? My word would be merciful. Whatever other words I might choose are all part of this magnificent quality of mercy. I'm not alone in my choice. In the Old Testament the word is used nearly 200 times to describe the nature of God.<sup>1</sup>*

- Vss. 17-22: An angel warns not to look back and to escape to the mountains. Ever the negotiator, Lot asks if they can escape to the little town of Zoar instead, perhaps a closer, easier destination than the mountains. The angel agrees. They begin their run of several (perhaps as much as 20) miles.
- Vss. 23-26: The escapees leave at dawn (vs. 15) and that same morning God rains fire and sulfur down on Sodom and Gomorrah and the entire plain. Lot's wife "looked back," disobeying the command. That phrase means more than just a glance over the shoulder, taking in the idea of focusing, concentrating, to the extent of being drawn back. (See Luke 17:28-36 for Jesus' use of this story as a warning to take God seriously.)
- Vss. 27-29: As an aftermath, Abraham, back where he had spoken with the LORD, sees the plume of smoke over the plain. God "remembered Abraham," his desire to save Lot and his family. Note that Lot is saved because God remembers Abraham.

### 4. FROM RICHES TO CAVE TO WORSE (19:30-38)

- We've seen Lot go from the slick negotiator with a share in the covenant to a wealthy leader in his community to a moral compromiser and now to a frightened, senseless old drunk in a cave. It gets worse. Here his daughters, perhaps seeing themselves as the sole survivors of Lot's people, seduce their father so that their family can continue. The results (besides the shame) are two sons and two nations, Moab and Ben-ammi (Ammon). Both of nations would become enemies of Abraham's descendents.

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1. Christians are resident aliens meant to transform our culture.
2. Homosexual behavior and abuse run counter to God's design for human sexuality as do incest, lust, fornication, and adultery.
3. God mercy (Hebrew, *chesed*) embraces all His other divine qualities.
4. Don't look back.
5. God is to be taken seriously.
6. The slippery slope to spiritual poverty is gradual and paved with compromise.

<sup>1</sup> LLOYD OGILVIE, "Turn Your Struggles into Stepping Stones (Word, 1995), 65.