

## WELCOME TO ONE OF THE BEST-KNOWN BIBLE STORIES

Though it is not a family-friendly story by any means, the story of God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is likely one of the most familiar accounts in all the Bible. I suspect if you asked almost anyone in western civilization to complete the phrase "Sodom and \_\_\_\_\_," that they could supply *Gomorrah* with little trouble. I also would not be surprised if a fairly large percentage of adults were aware that the term *sodomy* comes from the sexual practices common in Sodom.

Along with the destruction of these cities, I suspect most would know that Lot fled from the city, and that his wife turned to a pillar of salt.

I suspect few, however, could recount many of the other details, such as the beginning of the story or the ultimate end of the story, or the saving of the town of Zoar. Even fewer could or would connect this story to **righteous Lot** (2 Pet. 2:7), and yet Scripture does that very thing, as we shall see.

## THE CONTINUITY WITH THE ABRAHAM STORY

In Genesis 18 we studied the visit from three angelic beings. That story ends with God wondering whether He should tell Abraham about the coming destruction of the cities of the plain (Gen. 18:17-18). Abraham pleads with God to spare the cities if as few as 10 righteous people could be found, to which God agrees. This incidentally reminds us that in the Old Testament God chiefly deals with entire nations, looking for a "critical mass" of righteousness. In our age of grace, God is dealing with individuals alone.

We must take Genesis 18 and 19 as one continuous story for a number of reasons. The first is that two of the three visitors are found in both chapters. The second is not as obvious to the English reader, but the segment from Genesis 18:1-19:38 is given in a single block of Hebrew text, showing continuity.

But there is also a parallelism between Abraham's response to the visitors and Lot's. In Genesis 18:2-8 there is a "see-greet-bow-invite-feed" pattern also seen in Genesis 19:1-3.<sup>1</sup>

But why the continuity? I think it helps us to follow-through on the Lot sub-narrative. Lot the nephew was the one running off to Sodom, then needing rescued by "Uncle Abraham" in the battle of the kings. Now he is very much a part of the Sodomite culture and needs rescued again, and it is, once again, Abraham's pleading for the righteous that saves him.

## THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STORY

After the parallelism in vv. 1-3 which we have already seen, Lot pleads that the men of the city would not deal **wickedly** (v. 7) with the visitors (vv. 4-7), Lot offers his daughters to the men, trading one wickedness for another in the name of hospitality (v. 8). The two guests physically, then miraculously saved Lot from the wicked citizens (vv. 9-11). The men warned Lot about the coming destruction at dawn, and Lot begged his sons-in-law to depart the city, but they laughed at him (vv. 12-14). In the morning, the men physically removed Lot and his wife and daughters from the city, giving them instructions to not look back (vv. 15-17). Lot pled with the men to allow him to go to Zoar, ultimately saving that city (vv. 18-23) when God destroyed the cities of the plain (vv. 24-25). Lot's wife looked back, and became a pillar of salt (v. 26). Abraham is mentioned as a key part of the account in verses 27-29. In verses 30-38, the two daughters, presumably believing they were the only three people left on earth, use their father to bring forth Moab and Benammi.

## WHAT TO DO WITH LOT AND HIS LADIES

2 Peter 2:7 speaks of **righteous Lot**, but everything we read about him appears *anything but righteous*. However, in this final account of Lot's life, he does everything humanly possible to save his guests and his family. It looks like, in the end, Lot rejected the wickedness of Sodom and was not himself involved in that wickedness.

Lot's wife, sadly, is known only by verse 26. We do not know her name, her family, or anything else about her. But we do know that her heart longed for Sodom, and she looked back, becoming part of the plain in which the cities existed.

Lot's daughters, in a sorely mistaken effort to save humanity from total destruction, become the "mothers" of the Moabites and the Ammonites. Later, intermarriage between Jews and these two "cousin" tribes would be prohibited (Dt. 23:3).

What seems to be showing through in this account is that Abraham's values of family, hospitality, and passing values to the next generation seem twisted and perverted in Lot's family. Lot protects his guests by offering his daughters, and his daughters end up "protecting" humanity in a way never expected. The moral of the story seems to be that *good values without good thinking can lead to a perversion of goodness*. This is what seems to have happened in Lot's family.

<sup>1</sup> Zvi Grumet. *Genesis: From Creation to Covenant*. Meggid Books. Pg. 205.