

## Genesis 19D (2011)

- We've been in our study of Abraham and Lot and Sodom for some time now
  - In fact it's been so long, we may have lost sight of what God is actually at work doing through these two chapters
    - First, we know that God set about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah to set an example for future generations of how God will judge sin
    - Secondly, we know God invited Abraham in on this plan to instruct Abraham concerning God's character and nature, so that Abraham might instruct future generations of Israel
    - Third, we know Abraham responded as God intended, praying for God to spare the righteous, and God agreed to Abraham's request
    - Then we watched as God did everything He promised, yet He still worked His plan exactly as He intended while maintaining perfect justice
      - The city was destroyed, the guilty received punishment, the righteous were rescued, and God kept His word with Abraham
  - Meanwhile, we also learned a great deal about the man Lot
    - We came to see him as a man of faith worn down by his association with the sinful world
    - As a man living a life of compromise and suffering great loss as a result, both in this world and in the next
    - And we witnessed God dealing with Lot as a Father deals with His children
      - He brought discipline and allowed the consequences of Lot's sin to rest upon him and his family
      - But nevertheless, God showed mercy to Lot in keeping with His character and His promise to Abraham
  - Through these events we also come to see a simple picture of how God will deal with Jewish and Gentile people in His plan for salvation

- Just as God befriended the man Abraham, God has entered into a covenant with the descendants of Abraham, the Jewish people
  - God will remain true to His promises to that people
- And just as Lot, the Gentile relative of Abraham, was blessed by his association with Abraham, so will Gentile people be blessed by their trusting in the promises God delivered to Israel
- And just as God brought judgment against the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord promises to bring judgment upon the world upon His return
  - And just as God rescued the few righteous in Lot's family from the cities prior to their destruction, likewise God promises to rescue the few righteous Gentiles prior to the coming world judgment
- And just as the rescue of Lot's family was accomplished by the ministry of angels, so will be the rescue of the righteous in the future day, as Paul describes:

**1Th. 4:15** For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

**1Th. 4:16** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

**1Th. 4:17** Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

- We call this coming rescue of the Gentile church the Rapture or the Resurrection
  - Having seen the Lord's faithfulness in delivering disobedient Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, we gain all the more assurance that the Lord will keep His word for our sakes
- We ended with Lot's wife having looked back and having turned to salt
  - Her true heart was exposed, and she suffered destruction like the rest of Sodom
    - And thus Lot's family has been reduced to just Lot and his two daughters, a worldly family alone in the world with nothing
  - But what of Abraham?

- Our story began with the Lord's meeting with Abraham and Abraham's compelling prayer
  - So now that the city has been destroyed, what has Abraham learned?

**Gen. 19:27** Now Abraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the LORD;

**Gen. 19:28** and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace.

**Gen. 19:29** Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived.

- Just the previous day Abraham had prayed to the Lord to spare the city if ten righteous were found
  - Obviously, Abraham's intent was to save Lot and his family
    - But Abraham's prayer requested that the entire city be spared
    - Saving the city was simply Abraham's way of accomplishing the goal of saving Lot
  - Here we are on the following morning, and Abraham awakens early to see what has become of the cities
    - He walks to the edge of his encampment, to the same place he had prayed with the Lord
    - And as Abraham looks down into the distant valley, he sees thick, black smoke ascending like the smoke of a furnace
      - This isn't a small thin wisp of smoke on the horizon
      - This is a huge billowing cloud of smoke rising from an impossibly hot furnace
      - Even from this distance of over 20 miles, Abraham can see it clearly
    - Well, if God wanted to teach Abraham a lesson about how God responds to sin, we can say "mission accomplished"
      - Abraham will have an indelible memory of the kind of response that unchecked depravity provokes from God

- And undoubtedly he taught this lesson to all his children
- But what else was going through Abraham's mind as he stared into that cloud of black smoke?
  - What happened to Lot?
    - It's likely that Abraham didn't know Lot's disposition, at least not at first and maybe never
  - So as Abraham stares at the smoke, he would have concluded that God didn't find the ten righteous, and so the cities were destroyed
    - And this is absolutely true
    - God didn't find ten righteous for there were not ten to be found
    - And as God promised, He destroyed the cities
  - But what Abraham doesn't know is that God still gave Abraham the desires of his heart concerning Lot
    - Ironically, Abraham has received what he desired but he doesn't know it
    - Yet He does know that God has done exactly as He promised
    - And because of Abraham's prayer, the world knows that there was not even ten righteous in these cities
      - So by His prayer Abraham contributed to God's purposes in helping communicate the absolute depravity of these cities
- I wonder if Abraham was resentful or angry at God?
  - The text doesn't tell us, but I believe v.29 is included in the narrative to make sure we leave the story with the right perspective
    - Moses says God remembered Abraham, meaning God understood Abraham's heart and acted to show favor (or grace) to Abraham
    - God rescued Lot, which is all that Abraham wanted

- But God wanted Abraham (and us) to remember not the rescue of a few righteous but rather the powerful judgment for the overwhelming number of sinful
  - This was the intended lesson of Sodom
  - And this is the memory Abraham carries away from this moment
- Perhaps one day Abraham eventually learned that Lot was saved by God's goodness
- But what if Abraham never learned of Lot's rescue? Would that lead you to think less of God's goodness?
  - Have you ever considered that at times God may have answered your prayers in ways you never knew?
    - Perhaps you received exactly what you wanted, even if it wasn't exactly what you requested
    - And perhaps God did that work in secret, to His glory and without informing you
    - Perhaps He was preventing us from taking pride in our participation or perhaps He simply wanted us to learn a different lesson
  - Be careful about assuming that we will always be the audience for God's handiwork in response to our prayers
    - Even if we don't see the final result, we can trust God is at work for His glory and the good of His name
    - Our prayers don't change God, but they always have impact, whether on ourselves or others
    - And we must be prepared to offer them without expectation of a direct, visible answer
    - In fact, sometimes it may appear that our requests were denied, as was the case for Abraham in this moment, when in fact they were granted
  - Even if we hear nothing back from God, it doesn't mean that God failed us, since His timeline is usually much longer than our patience

- There is a story of a youth pastor who had an encounter with one of his ex-students, and he wrote this:

Yesterday, I ran into an old high school student who was part of the youth group I led in the early part of this decade. This student has had a rough life since high school graduation, hooked on drugs, in and out of trouble, kicked out of his home.

My heart has grieved for him whenever I have received updates about his life over the years. Yesterday, I ran into this same former student, and he was clean and sober, a huge smile on his face and a new commitment to follow Jesus with his life. Talk about a day maker!

The next day I was cleaning out some old files in my church office and interestingly enough, I found a prayer request list from a student group from six years earlier, and it included a request from that same young man who I had met the previous day. I had completely forgotten why I held onto this prayer list.

"Dear God, help me to walk in your foot steps. Let me understand what is right and wrong. God give me the wisdom and obedience to do the right things. Help me to think through the consequences of my actions. I know how much I mean to you Lord and I want to grow closer to you. Thank you for your forgiveness and understanding Lord. In your name, Amen."

After 6 years later, it looks like God has answered this simple prayer of a high school student.

- As we grow in our walk with the Lord, we learn that we are really poor judges of God's plan
  - We just don't have a big enough picture; we can't see everything God sees and we can't understand everything God knows
  - We have no understanding for how a certain event will impact the future of all things God is accomplishing
    - Like the apostle Peter who rebuked Jesus at the suggestion that Jesus must be betrayed and die
    - Peter thought that was a terrible idea, but he had no idea how good an idea that truly was
- We don't understand these things, but God knows all things
  - And so we are told to trust Him knowing He is good

- Finally, the story of Lot includes a final, sad footnote

**Gen. 19:30** Lot went up from Zoar, and stayed in the mountains, and his two daughters with him; for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; and he stayed in a cave, he and his two daughters.

- Lot goes to Zoar, the small city he requested as his sanctuary
  - But in one verse, we're told he promptly leaves for the mountains after all
    - We can easily imagine why Lot grew afraid while trying to start again in Zoar
    - Zoar was the only city in the valley to escape judgment
      - So when the one surviving family from the other cities wanders into Zoar, how do you think the city population responded to them?
      - Undoubtedly, they reacted quite negatively to their presence
      - They probably assumed they were cursed and feared the same judgment might follow them to Zoar
  - The angels had told Lot he should escape to the mountains, but Lot wasn't practiced at listening to the voice of the Lord
    - And so he found his way to the mountains the hard way
      - There is a certain irony to Lot's situation
      - He rejected the nomadic life of his uncle Abraham because he preferred the lush, easy life of a city
    - But now that his sinful choices have caught up with him, he is living in caves, an even worse existence than when he enjoyed the wealth of a nomad
      - The pursuit of the world may achieve short-term benefits, but it inevitably leads to longterm losses
      - When we remain in the course God sets for us, it may appear to be a sacrifice – and in a sense it is

- But in the longterm it grants us far greater reward and in the meantime, peace
- So Lot and his daughters retreat to the mountains
  - Can you imagine how pitiful they must have appeared?
    - No possessions, no future, destitute and rejected by the very people they sought to live among
  - For Lot's daughters, the calamity is even greater
    - Young women in that day hoped for one thing above all else: to be married
    - To be without a husband and sons was a fate worse than death, because it led to a life of poverty and shame
  - But here they are in a cave, rejected by the only city and the only people they knew...or so they thought
    - So the daughters make other plans

**Gen. 19:31** Then the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of the earth.

**Gen. 19:32** "Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him that we may preserve our family through our father."

**Gen. 19:33** So they made their father drink wine that night, and the firstborn went in and lay with her father; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

**Gen. 19:34** On the following day, the firstborn said to the younger, "Behold, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father."

**Gen. 19:35** So they made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger arose and lay with him; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

**Gen. 19:36** Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father.

**Gen. 19:37** The firstborn bore a son, and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day.

**Gen. 19:38** As for the younger, she also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi; he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day.

- The firstborn hatches the idea
  - She states that there is not another man on earth to unite with them in marriage



- We know she didn't mean this literally, since she just left Zoar and knows there are men there
- What she means then is there are no men left in their world who would want them
  - The men of the other four cities in the valley are gone
  - And the one remaining city will have nothing to do with them
- So for these women, it appears that there are no men left in the world
  - But what she's really saying is there are no men left in the world we know and love
    - The world of the valley
  - Because there are men in Abraham's household, back in the heights
- These daughters are now suffering in the shadow their father created for them
  - He raised them in Sodom, and so that is all they know
    - As the saying goes, you can take the girl out of Sodom, but you can't take the Sodom out of the girl
  - As Christians, we should recognize the principle at work here in Lot's family
    - Our sin will have consequences beyond our own situation
    - We bring consequences upon others as well, and those consequences can extend into later generations
- Their plan was simple enough
  - Get Dad drunk, and when he has lost his senses, they enticed him into an incestuous encounter
    - First the older and then the younger on successive nights
    - The text makes a point of emphasizing that Lot knew nothing of the events

- The shame rests squarely on the daughters, since Lot did not knowingly participate, but Lot doesn't escape without some culpability
  - Obviously, he raised these daughters and chose to live in an environment where they could develop into such morally corrupt women
  - And he agreed to become drunk...twice
  - Lot will have plenty to answer for, and as the story comes to an end in Scripture, he has become the Bible's poster child for the worldly and disobedient saint
- Did you notice how similar Lot's account is to the account of Noah?
  - Noah was a righteous man by faith rescued from a disaster brought upon the world for its extreme sin
    - After the event, Noah becomes drunk and is taken advantage of by his children
  - The outcomes of these two accounts are also similar
    - Each story brought us to the conclusion that God's judgment didn't solve the problem of Adam's sin
      - Both Noah and Lot retained their sin nature even after the judgment had passed
      - The problem of sin still awaits a solution, one found only in the coming Seed Messiah
  - Secondly, each episode ended in offspring who bear the brunt of God's anger
    - In the case of Noah, the cursed offspring were the Canaanites, who later caused Israel to play the harlot
    - In the case of Lot, the daughters give birth to two boys who founded two of Israel's greatest enemies in Scripture, the Moabites and the Ammonites
  - In both the story of Noah and of Lot, man's sin gave rise to a future consequence for God's people, which God ultimately turned to good in chastising and disciplining His people