

Lot and Sodom (2)

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THESE TWO articles on Genesis 19 view the subject matter from two particular points of view. Firstly, there is the New Testament's threefold emphasis on Lot being a righteous man (2 Pet. 2:7,8), which must colour our understanding of his actions in Genesis 19. Secondly, Jesus himself links Noah and Lot in his exposition (Lk. 17:26-37), and there is a symmetry between the destruction of the world of Noah, with eight souls being saved by water, and the destruction of the cities of the plain, with three souls being delivered through fire. A table in [the first article](#) gave some of the detail of this symmetry.

It was also emphasised in the first article that, as well as Sodom and Gomorrah being destroyed, Lot's mighty ecclesia had previously suffered spiritual destruction because of the abundance of bread and idleness in Sodom (Ezek. 16:49), and that is the lesson that Jesus draws in Luke 17 as an exhortation for us all.

A particular blindness

We concluded the previous article with the angels having rescued Lot, for the first time, out of the hands of the violent Sodomites, and having themselves shut the door of the house, even as Yahweh shut the door of the ark (Gen. 19:10). We continue in verse 11: "And they [the angels] smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door". The Hebrew word for "blindness" here is used only here and in 2 Kings 6:18, which records that Elisha prayed to Yahweh to smite the Syrian army with blindness, which He did, enabling Elisha to lead them into the midst of Samaria. It would appear that, rather than being a total blindness, it was a disorientating condition, so that the men of Sodom "wearied themselves to find the door".

We can assume that by this time Lot was aware that his visitors were angels, and, according to verses 12 and 13, they revealed that they had come to destroy that place, asking Lot, "Hast thou here any besides? son[s] in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever [whomsoever, RV] thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place". Here is another trial for Lot, and

indeed his family. God knew precisely how many his family numbered and how many would respond to the call to come out and be separate, but it is a regular feature of Scripture for God or His representatives to ask questions of a person to reveal their character. See the [table](#) overleaf for some examples.

The angels' question indicates that there may have been as many as ten members of Lot's family, rather than only four as we might have thought.¹ Verse 12 indicates at least two sons-in-law, since, though the AV reads "son in law", other translations read "sons in law", meaning that Lot had at least two married daughters. The word "sons" indicates at least two sons, and we know that he had at least two unmarried daughters.² This makes eight children including the sons-in-law, to which must be added Lot and his wife. One might speculate as to whether Abraham's words to Yahweh in 18:32, "Peradventure ten shall be found there", have a relevance to this calculation.

Lot's care for his family

As in 19:6, again we see in verse 14 Lot's courage as he ventured from the house for the purpose of the saving of his household, out into the dark night of Sodom, where he would not have been safe on the streets, "But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law". The reaction that we receive in witnessing to people whom we meet can sometimes be similar.

It must have been a very desolate Lot who returned to his house. Then, "when the morning arose", the angels pressed him to leave immediately. Then we read in verse 16: "And while he lingered . . ."; and we ask ourselves why Lot lingered. It certainly was not because Sodom was to be destroyed, for he hated their unlawful deeds; but, as we have seen, he was deeply concerned for his family. Perhaps he was desperately searching for something else he could do to

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1. The writer is grateful to the late Brother John Collyer for this point.
 2. Verse 14 speaks of "his sons in law, which married his daughters", but the RV has a marginal note "Or, were to marry". Certainly the daughters were virgins (v. 8) and were found at home in Lot's house.

God's testing questions		
Here are a few examples showing how God or His representative asks questions to draw out a confession or reveal a person's character in a response.		
Genesis 3:9	God to Adam	"Where art thou?"
Genesis 3:13	God to the woman	"What is this that thou hast done?"
Genesis 4:9	God to Cain	"Where is Abel thy brother?"
2 Kings 5:25	Elisha	"Whence comest thou, Gehazi?"
2 Kings 20:14	Isaiah to Hezekiah	"From whence came they unto thee?"
Matthew 22:12	The king	"Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?"
Matthew 26:50	Jesus to Judas	"Friend, wherefore art thou come?"
Mark 9:33	Jesus to the disciples	"What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?"
Luke 24:19	Jesus to Cleopas	"What things?"
John 6:5	Jesus to Philip	"Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"
Acts 5:8	Peter to Sapphira	"Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much?"
Acts 9:4	Jesus	"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"
The lesson for us		
<p>"We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10)</p> <p>Shall we be like this: ". . . And he was speechless" (Mt. 22:12)?</p> <p>Or shall we be like this: ". . . that we may have boldness [Gk. parrhēsia, literally openness of speech] in the day of judgment" (1 Jno. 4:17)?</p>		

assist their eternal welfare; such would be the motivation of a righteous man.

Further, we know that his wife did not believe the Word of God (vv. 17,26); that, unlike Sarah in the previous chapter, she had not made herself available to 'entertain angels unawares'; and that Jesus sets her forward as an example of one who was preoccupied with eating and drinking, planting and building, rather than one of those who were "strangers and pilgrims on the earth". The last phrase comes from Hebrews 11:13, and verse 15 of that chapter says: "And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned"—words appropriate to Lot's wife.

It therefore seems highly likely that Lot lingered because of his great concern for his family, and because his wife was advancing every argument she could think of to prevent Lot's exodus. His daughters likewise may not have been very

keen to leave their friends and fiancées in Sodom.

The mercy of Yahweh

But our God is very merciful. Knowing beforehand how many persons would be saved out of Sodom, He had sent two angels with a total of four hands, exactly enough to lay hold "upon his [Lot's] hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD [Yahweh] being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city" (Gen. 19:16).

Lot is then instructed to escape to the mountain, the place which he left when he separated from Abraham. But Lot is a man of like passions to ourselves, especially those of us who live in Western society, with its running water from the tap, electricity and gas supplies taken for granted, and comfortable transport systems. A more basic nomadic life might appear to be beyond our

abilities, and, like Lot, we might prevaricate in the face of such circumstances. Once more, it may have been concern also for the remnant of his family, to keep them together, which encouraged him to request that they should be allowed to take refuge in the little city of Zoar.

Whilst aware of God's redeeming grace and mercy, and having been miraculously delivered out of the hand of the men of Sodom, Lot says: "I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die" (v. 19). Thus Lot showed himself like Israel, who, having been miraculously delivered out of the hand of Pharaoh, then thought that the same God Who had delivered them would let them perish in the wilderness (Ex. 14:11).³

Genesis 19 continues: "The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the LORD [Yahweh] rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD [Yahweh] out of heaven" (vv. 23,24). So it will be that, when "the Sun of righteousness arise[s] with healing in his wings" for those who are his jewels (Mal. 4:2,3; 3:17), he will also come in judgement for the wicked (Lk. 17:29,30).

Remember Lot's wife

Along with the wicked men of the plain, the remainder of Lot's family and also all his possessions were destroyed. "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain" (Gen. 19:17) had been the command to Lot. This certainly would have been communicated to his wife, but she failed to follow in the footsteps of her lord (unlike Sarah). Her heart was in Sodom; it would have been with unbelieving dismay that she "looked back from behind him" (v. 26) and became a pillar of salt, preserved as a warning for Christadelphians today against being preoccupied with the cares of this life.

It was appropriate that she should have been turned into a pillar of salt, since she was responsible for there not being a minimum of ten righteous persons in Sodom and Gomorrah, which would have been a preserving salt for the cities of the plain (18:32; cf. Mt. 5:13). This woman has no name in Scripture, and (unlike Manoah's faithful wife, who represented the woman of Genesis 3:15) her name will not be found in the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 13:8).

In chapter 13 we are told that Lot's substance, his cattle and his herdsmen were so great that he and Abraham could not dwell together. Now all that great substance was gone; just Lot and two

unhappy, unspiritual daughters remained. That great ecclesia was gone, devoured by the iniquity of Sodom: "pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness", and a failure to "strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (Ezek. 16:49; cf. Prov. 21:13; Ps. 113:7).

Whatever his daughters might have said on the matter, the desolate Lot soon moved out of Zoar to the mountain, even as the angel had originally instructed. Perhaps the inhabitants of Zoar displayed their hostility towards this righteous man, whom they may have linked with the destruction of their local prosperous economy and society; or perhaps Lot realised that the people in a small village were just as wicked as those in a large city. In the days in which we live, undoubtedly the wickedness of the country village is little different from that of the city, although one suspects that this may be due to the appalling influence of that multicoloured eye god, Molech, before whom his worshippers recline in devotion for hours each day.

God remembered Abraham

Genesis 19:27,28 describes Abraham as rising early, and he "beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace". As Psalm 119:119 reads, picking up the idea of a smelting furnace: "Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love Thy testimonies". However, as God redeemed Israel out of the furnace of affliction (Isa. 48:10; Deut. 4:20), so Lot was sent forth from the overthrow because "God remembered Abraham" (Gen. 19:29). Although Abraham's intercession for the righteous in Sodom was not answered as he perhaps expected, yet "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:16).

Two immoral daughters

Incest would have been a light thing in the cities of the plain, and "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). Indeed, it was not necessary for these girls to have uncovered their father's nakedness to preserve seed in their family. The statement of the eldest was wrong when she said, "there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth" (Gen. 19:31), for they themselves had previously

3. [Table 2 in the previous article](#) showed similarities between Lot and Israel.

been rescued by Abraham and his 318 trained men, young men who had been nourished on the Abrahamic faith (14:14; 18:19) and who would have been ideal spiritually minded husbands for spiritually minded young women, as Othniel was for Achsah (Judg. 1:12-15).

Genesis 14:16 is specific in saying that Abraham rescued "his brother Lot, and his goods, *and the women also*". Sadly, the minds of these young women were not seeking the things that be above, but "*after the manner of all the earth*" (cf. Col. 3:2,6). Indeed, they followed in the footsteps of Ham and Canaan, who mocked Noah's nakedness and drunken unconsciousness (Gen. 9:21-25), and were cursed accordingly.

Moab and Ammon

It would not have been difficult to induce Lot into a comatose state with wine, and "Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father" (19:36). The offspring were given the names Moab and Ben-ammi, meaning 'from her father' and 'son of my relative', and their mothers' characteristics of immorality were to surface in Scripture again in Numbers 25:1, when the women of Moab seduced Israel into the worship of false gods (cf. 31:16).

The prophet Jeremiah refers back to the later verses in Genesis 19 when he is inspired to exhort Moab to learn lessons from their righteous progenitor and to cease their arrogance against Israel: "Make ye him drunken: for he magnified himself against the LORD [Yahweh] . . . O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth" (48:26,28).⁴

Zephaniah likewise prophesies of the judgments upon both Moab and Ammon with reference to their origins: "Surely Moab shall be as

Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation" (2:9).

The record says little more about what happened to the desolate Lot dwelling in that cave. Whether life became a little easier for him, or whether he died there, we know not and do not need to know. The lessons from his life are exhibited for our learning and meditation, as indicated by the Apostle Paul when he refers to Lot in his epistle to brethren and sisters in Corinth, who, like Lot, lived in a very wicked city: "every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is . . . If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:13,15).

Lot's joy in the Kingdom

It will, however, be a great joy to Lot in the Kingdom to see the fulfilment of the restoration prophecies of Isaiah (16) and Jeremiah (48:47; 49:6), when the people of Moab and Ammon (the Jordanians) benefit from the mercy of Yahweh (as did Lot in Genesis 19:16) at the time when "in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness" (Isa. 16:5).

(Concluded)

4. Jeremiah 48 contains many references to Lot's flight from Sodom, for example, verse 34, where the cities Horonaim ('double cave town') and Zoar are mentioned, and the repeated theme of fleeing throughout the chapter.

Deadline for religious groups in Russia

According to an Internet report from the *Moscow Times*, 31 December was to be the end for many religious groups. Hundreds of religious organisations around the country would have been unlikely to have met the December deadline for re-registration, forcing them to disband or severely limit their activities, a prominent religious-rights lawyer said recently. Small churches or religious organisations new to Russia, often described as "sects", are likely to be downgraded to "groups", said Pchelintsev, head of the Law and Religion Institute. They would thus lose their right to hold services in public places, distribute literature, own property or invite foreign guests. Pchelintsev said that, across Russia, authorities have been particularly hard on Pentecostal groups, denying them registration on the grounds that they prayed for healing without having a medical licence.

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