

Sodom, Lot and Abraham

The New Testament portion allotted for the day contains the exhortation of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking of a coming day of judgment:

“In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot’s wife.” (Lu. 17:31-32).

Lot’s wife therefore, is provided as an example to remember when facing a day of judgment – to the Jews in AD70 in the first instance, but also to us also, who live in the closing years of the Gentile times. For our considerations today, we shall consider the context and circumstances in relation to Lot’s wife, to see examples for our own lives.

The record in Genesis records how that Abraham was called out of his hometown in Ur of the Chaldees. He was commanded by God to leave his family – his kindred – and got out from among them, taking his nephew Lot: “so Abram departed, as Yahweh had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him” (Gen. 12:4). Due to particular circumstances, Lot became attracted to the city of Sodom: “Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah ... then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan ... and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom.” (Gen. 13:10-12).

Notice the progression of ideas in the narrative: verse 11 states that he chose the plain of Jordan, and journeyed east. Then verse 12 tells us that he pitched his tent towards Sodom. Then verse 12 of chapter 14, we find that he “dwelt in Sodom”. And chapter 19:2 informs us that he dwelt in an house in Sodom.

This latter aspect is most instructive: he dwelt in a house, whilst Abraham remained in a tent! The inspired commentary on Abraham emphasizes this point:

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles (tents) with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:9).

What a contrast this is! Whilst Lot found himself being drawn to city life, and the apparent prosperity of Sodom, living in a house, Abraham remained a stranger and sojourner in the land. He lived out the spirit of a wandering nomad, waiting patiently for the promises to be given to him. He desired no part of this world, but looked for a city to come at the appointed time. He as others, “died in faith, not having received the promises, but having *seen them* afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. 11:13).

Notice where Abraham’s gaze was fixed: he had “seen” the promises with the eye of faith. By contrast, Lot was attracted to the superficial prosperity of this life: “Lot *lifted up his eyes*, and beheld all the plain of Jordan ...” (Gen.13:10). It was the sight of prosperity that he was attracted to, as he was led by the “lust of the eyes” (1 Jno. 2:16). It is significant that the word “Lot” literally means “veiled”: he was, as it were, a man with the vail over his eyes, not being able to see the spiritual principles that Abraham chose to enact in his mode of living. But Abraham on the other hand, once Lot had departed from him was told by the Lord:

“Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward and westward: for all that land that thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever ...” (Gen. 13:14-15).

Indeed, as verse 17 of this chapter demonstrates, this is what Abraham spent the rest of his life doing: walking to and fro through the land, trusting that at some point, he, and his future seed would be given it for an inheritance. Lot chose temporal prosperity in part of the land, but Abraham looked for a city with foundations, and was promised it all – and this promise applies to us also:

“whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”. (2 Pet. 1:4).

We must therefore follow Abraham, who is “the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our Father Abraham ...” (Rom. 4:12). Living out the spirit of strangers and sojourners, we do not belong to this world, or to the corruption thereof – in many particulars, the example of Abraham is powerful, and instructive to us to follow.

Lot, once he had obtained his house in Sodom, sat in the gate, and seems to have been in a judicial position (cp Gen. 19:1, 9). But although he was initially attracted to the pleasures of that city, the Divine record reveals that he was soon troubled by its morals. Peter describes how Lot was delivered from the destruction of that place, saying that God:

“delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds). The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished ...” (2 Pet. 2:7-9).

Notice the terms used of Lot: “just Lot”, “that righteous man”, “the godly”. Despite his faults and failures, it would appear that Lot maintained his personal integrity whilst all around him, men and women were given over to fornication and licentiousness. He was considered “righteous”, despite his errors of judgment. He thus stands as an example of those who need deliverance from the ungodly world, soon to suffer judgment at the Hand of Almighty God.

Genesis chapter 18 brings our attention to Abraham in relation to Sodom. He had remained separate from it and its sinful ways, and the Lord through his Angelic messenger revealed to him what he intended to do:

“And Yahweh said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know” (Gen. 19:20-21).

Notice again, the emphasis on *seeing* – the Almighty certainly already knew what the sin of Sodom was, but the Angel was sent to “see” it before the judgments began. Evidently, the Angel would see a faithful remnant in that place – made up of Lot’s family – and this is the basis for which Abraham pleaded for the city to be spared. The record records the word of Abraham:

“ ... Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the

righteous with the wicked ... and Yahweh said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes ..." (Gen. 18:23-26).

We know the record very well, of how Abraham besought the Lord for the sake of 45 righteous, then 40, then 30, then 20, and finally for 10: and Yahweh said, "I will not destroy it for ten's sake" (Gen. 18:32). But why 10? It is interesting to notice that Lot's family numbered 10 at this point. There was Lot, and his wife, 2 married daughters, 2 virgin daughters, 2 sons in law, and 2 sons, which comes to 10. Abraham besought Yahweh to spare the city for Lot's family's sake, ten who comprised the household of faith.

But we know the record, that of Lot's family, there was not 10 faithful souls to be found. The city was to be destroyed – but the Lord would not destroy the righteous with the wicked, they would be brought out and spared.

Similar words are used of wayward Israel, which had become like Sodom in various particulars. Consider these words of Isaiah:

"Except Yahweh of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" (Isa. 1:9).

And again, the word of Yahweh through the prophet Jeremiah:

"Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it" (Jer. 5:1).

However, such a remnant were not to be found and so destruction came upon the wayward nation.

Israel, were like Sodom in that their sin was plain and open: "the shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not ..." (Isa. 3:9). But what was the sin of Sodom? We have an interesting list given through Ezekiel, which is highly relevant to western society in our day:

"Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, **price, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me:** therefore I took them away as I saw good" (Ezek. 16:49-50).

Each of these aspects can be found in modern European society. When we think of Sodom, we, perhaps, rightly first think of the sin of homosexuality (Jude 1:7), but in Ezekiel's list, this came last. Other aspects, some of which seem innocuous by comparison, are regarded as "iniquity", including "abundance of idleness". There is no place for idleness in the life of the disciple of Christ, for it is written that "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). Only those who are "diligent" in their seeking of Yahweh will give Him Pleasure. We could examine each of these aspects to Sodom's sin – but that must wait for a future study.

By the grace of God, Lot and those of his family who heeded the warning, were taken out of the city prior to its destruction. As we saw earlier, God would not destroy the righteous with the wicked – He spared Just Lot. He "turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an

overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly” (2 Pet. 2:6), and spared his servant, who was sore vexed by the iniquities of the city in which he dwelt.

The destruction of Sodom was therefore an “example” of the judgements to come upon the world of ungodly man and women. Just as Sodom and her Daughters were given over to licentiousness, even so there is a modern-day harlot system which is ripe for destruction: “upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH: (Rev. 17:5). This is “the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt” (Rev. 11:8), which is soon to suffer the same destiny as the Sodomites of old. Hence, the appeal will go out: “... Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities” (Rev. 18:4-5, see whole chapter).

What then, of ourselves? We return to the words of Messiah: “remember Lot’s wife” (Lu. 17:32). What happened to Lot’s wife? The Lord directs our attention back to Lot’s day:

“Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed ...” (Lu. 17:28-29).

People were going about their daily business, totally unaware that the judgments of the Almighty were about to be poured out – just like in our own day. And again, like our contemporaries, those to whom Lot preached did not take him seriously. But the judgments came, the same day in which Lot’s family were led by angelic hands out of that city. Lot’s wife looked back with longing and regret for what she was leaving behind: “But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt” (Gen. 19:26). It is evident that this was not a casual glance as she fled the judgements, but an intent gazing upon what she was losing. It may even have been that she wanted to return, for the Master gives her as an example of how not to “return back” (Luk. 17:31).

It is written that “the Just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. 10:38-39). Lot’s wife drew back when “Just Lot” was spared and lived because of his faith. We also must not draw back, but spiritually separate ourselves from the society that Messiah is coming to judge:

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

In the few days that remain, there is no time to waste fraternising with the ungodly. We must hold fast, and strive to be a holy people unto the Lord. Though we, like Lot, are sore vexed at the deeds of the ungodly, we look for better days to come. We must heed the example of Lot’s wife: when the angel comes to take us to be with our Lord, we must be prepared and willing to forsake all, and leave everything behind us. All that will matter in that day, will be how we appear before the Son of God. Though we be but a despised minority in this world of iniquity, we look forward to acceptance in his presence, that we will become part of that great multitude that no man can number. Then, we shall receive strength and salvation to live with faithful Abraham in the inheritance promised to him and his Seed.

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