

Genesis 19:12-29 Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place.

¹³ For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it." ¹⁴ So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, "Up! Get out of this place, for the Lord is about to destroy the city." But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

¹⁵ As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city."

¹⁶ But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. ¹⁷ And as they brought them out, one said, "Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away."

¹⁸ And Lot said to them, "Oh, no, my lords. ¹⁹ Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life. But I cannot escape to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me and I die. ²⁰ Behold, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there—is it not a little one?—and my life will be saved!" ²¹ He said to him, "Behold, I grant you this favor also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. ²² Escape there quickly, for I can do nothing till you arrive there." Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

²³ The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar. ²⁴ Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven. ²⁵ And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. ²⁶ But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

²⁷ And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord. ²⁸ And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the valley, and he looked and, behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace. ²⁹ So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.

Announcements:

1. Baby Dedication: Next week! Email: Maegan
2. Baptism: May 16th email: me
3. Evangelism Workshop: Wednesday May 12th evening
4. Welcome Night: May 14th, apps & drinks.

Genesis 19:12-29 | Lot's Rescue

In today's text God will destroy the city of Sodom. It is a microcosm of the story of the destruction of the world that we saw in the story of Noah and the flood. The parallels are actually pretty pronounced. Before the destruction is announced God describes a wicked world/city. In the flood story fallen angels intermingle with

humans. In the Sodom story, humans unsuccessfully seek to “know” the angelic men. Both show the rescue of a key man and his family. Both show the total destruction of everyone else. Both show the shame and nakedness of the key men exposed after the rescue. One has offspring that lead to mixed results of righteousness, one leads to nations of destruction.

Genesis shows us these patterns because it is teaching us how to interpret the patterns of the world. This similar pattern will take place throughout Israel’s own history at a national level. We are being shown that God’s judgement is like gravity and sin piles up like weight on a bridge. It can only bear so much before it will one day collapse. We’re given the pattern so that we can know judgement is coming. Jesus appeals to both situations so that it might be shown;

Luke 17:27-28 They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. ²⁸ Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building,

Here is the warning. You know what it looks like when judgement is on the horizon? It looks just like this. When we live in a world that has sponged the horizon free of judgement, we likewise enter a world absent of meaning. Because consider what judgment is. It is declaring in reality whether or not something measures up to an ideal. This is true in any area of life. Consider if you’re trying to lose weight or train for a marathon. You set up a picture of where you want to be in your mind and then you aim towards that picture. That picture brings meaning to each run you go on, and it judges your performance. The judgement and the meaning are connected. To live in a world with judgement is to live in a world of meaning.

God is the true judge, because God is the true ideal. He is the one towards whom our lives point and in whom our lives find their meaning. If your life points towards anything less than him, you lose meaning. This is the definition of sin, it is to have a heart that is oriented away from God and toward something else as its ideal. Today we’ll see how we reject judgement, Lot’s dangerous bargain, and love of the world.

1. Judgement as a Joke

Genesis 19:12-13 Then the men said to Lot, “Have you anyone else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone you have in the city, bring them out of the place. ¹³ For we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it.”

After rescuing Lot from the mob the Angels share with Lot their exact plan, they have been sent by the Lord to destroy Sodom. The outcry of the city has piled up before the Lord, and in their phrasing they describe how the

wickedness is so bad it demands destruction. But in their announcement of destruction they offer Lot a way of escape, and not just Lot but his family also. It is the same pattern of salvation that we have seen throughout the scriptures so far. Noah and his sons and their wives, Abraham and his offspring, and here Lot and his family. God offers his salvation at the level of the family, and we see the inclusion of the family and the individuals opportunity to reject it.

Genesis 19:14 So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, “Up! Get out of this place, for the Lord is about to destroy the city.” But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

That Lot comes across as a joke says a lot about Lot's character, but it also tells us about the men and culture of Sodom. This is a people who have lost their capacity to imagine judgement. So that even the dire warning of its imminent presence only comes across as a joke. We've talked about laughter before, when Sarah laughed at the idea of God being able to supply her offspring in her old age. Laughter establishes boundaries of what is acceptable to imagine and what is outside the realm of acceptability. There is no place for repercussions in Sodom.

But I want you to imagine, explaining to a friend that they need to reconsider their decision to lie to their spouse because God will judge them. It would likely feel laughable. We don't lead lives of meaning because we don't believe in judgement.

Lot is unable to convince any others to follow him outside his wife and daughters who were already with him. The morning is beginning to dawn and the angels are hastening Lot to leave.

2. Lot's Dangerous Bargain

Genesis 19:16 But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.

Lot's character continues to shine through. He can't really bring himself to part with Sodom, or to enter the reality of the moment. So the Angels seized him and his wife and daughters and brought him outside the city by force. But look at the reasoning for his seizure, it is because the Lord is merciful to him.

Perhaps feeling like you've lost everything, and that all you've known and built up is being stripped away from you, might be the Lord's mercy. Perhaps the Lord is rescuing you by nothing going according to your plans. Perhaps it is his kindness that destroys your intentions. This is the picture of our salvation. Not that God stands back passively waiting for us to come to him, but that God grabs us by the wrist and drags us into his rescue.

Genesis 19:17 And as they brought them out, one said,
 “Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in
 the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away.”

But God’s rescue is total. There is no going back to your own plans for your life. You cannot take a little Sodom with you, or stop, or even look back. The rescue of the Lord is a severe rescue. Lot shows us the tight grip that Sodom had on his heart. He pleads to not escape to the hills but instead to settle in a little city close by to Sodom, to remain in the valley. Listen to Lot’s desire.

Genesis 19:20 Behold, this city is near enough to flee to,
 and it is a little one. Let me escape there—is it not a little
 one?—and my life will be saved!”

Can we be saved while having just a little bit of our life that remains our own. Our own little secret sins and desires? Look it’s just a little one, right? Here is the strange part of Lot’s bargain, the angels have given him a command to flee to the hills, they said, “escape for your life!” But here Lot offers an alternative plan, so that “my life will be saved,” he said. This shows us what Lot considers his life.

Lot’s life is totally intertwined with Sodom. He sat in the gate, remember he had a door which means he had a house, unlike his uncle Abraham who is still dwelling in a tent. Perhaps he even imagined a world where there was no judgement and his desires could run wild. **Lot sees his life being saved as avoiding judgement but remaining unchanged as a person.** It means incorporating God’s rescue into his life but God is calling him to abandon his life for the sake of his rescue. This is what Jesus means when he says,

Matthew 16:25 whoever would save his life will lose it, but
 whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

But shining against the backdrop of Lot’s inability to part with Sodom is the unstoppable grace of God. The angels allow Lot to flee to the small city, and restrain their destruction of Sodom until he is safe. Lot’s life will be spared, but his other losses will only continue to mount.

3. Love of the World

Genesis 19:24-25 ²⁴ Then the Lord rained on Sodom and
 Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven.
²⁵ And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all
 the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

The destruction is clearly from God. It rains from the heavens, and we see the decoration of Sodom in the pattern of the flood, but by fire instead of water. But the destruction of all that Lot had in Sodom, stretches up into his own family.

Genesis 19:26 But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

There is a sense in which her desire to remain in Sodom causes her to become Sodom. This is the end of holding Sodom in your heart, the destruction reaches you. And here we see the only true distinction between Lot and Sodom. Although it was weak and faint, Lot had a faith in his rescuers to keep his eyes from turning back towards death. He was willing to let Sodom die.

In his book The Great Divorce, C.S. Lewis writes a fable in the vein of Dante's Divine Comedy, from the perspective of a tourist visiting heaven and hell. One of the characters shown is a ghostly man with a small annoying lizard on his shoulder, and the angel giving the tour offers to kill the lizard. As the story develops we realize the lizard is the man's lust. It whispers into the man's ear night and day, and the man hates it but at the offer to kill it, the man recoils. You couldn't possibly kill it! Perhaps another day, the man suggests. It would kill me if you killed it! The man grows volatile. Then the lizard begins speaking into the mans ear that he'll be without the lizard forever!

Finally the man is convinced by the angel to kill the lizard. Here is the cry of faith from the ghost; "Go on, can't you? Get it over. Do what you like,' bellowed the ghost: but ended, whimpering, 'God help me. God help me.' A real hero of faith.

The angel takes the lizard and crushes it in his hands and it falls dead to the ground. But then the strangest thing happens. The lizard begins to transform, it turns into a beautiful noble stallion. And the man turns from a ghost into a warrior. The man mounts the horse and rides off, up the mountain like a shooting star.

Genesis 19:29 So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had lived.

Lot was saved, not by his own righteousness but because God remembered Abraham. In remembering Abraham he remembers his promise to send one through him the whole world will be saved. Jesus bids us like lot, to come and die, and to lay down our lives so that we might truly live. But look at the truth of the exchange he is asking us to make. We are trading the city of chaos and destruction for the mountains in the land of promise. We are trading the lizard on our shoulders commanding us, for the steed heading our command. But we must die. That means our plans belong to Jesus now. But we can trust him, because he is gracious and saved us no matter the cost to himself.