

Introduction

The account of the destruction of Sodom in the Bible is known as a “signal judgement”. What this means is that this event is harkened back to at numerous places in the Bible as an example for other situations.

Famously, Jesus’ refers to Sodom in [Matthew 10](#). Jesus has sent out his disciples to proclaim the kingdom and he gives them their marching orders. They are to go from city to city proclaiming the kingdom. If a house receives them then they should proclaim their peace over the house. However, if Jesus’ disciples are not received, they should let their peace return to them. Jesus says,

Matthew 10:14–15 ESV

And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

As a signal judgement, we are encouraged to consider closely what God is doing with Sodom so that we might learn and give praise to God for His mighty acts.

The passage breaks into two parts:

1. In verses 23-26 we have the example of Lot’s wife. “Don’t Look Back”
2. In verses 27-29 the story returns to Abraham. “Salvation by Association”

Don’t Look Back (vv. 23-26)

Last week’s passage concluded with Lot requesting to take refuge in Zoar while the valley around Sodom and Gomorrah is destroyed. In verse 23 Lot arrives at Zoar. As Lot arrives there, verse 24 states that, “**the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven.**”

Verse 25 describes the extent of God’s judgement which is total. “**He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.**”

God’s judgement on Sodom and the valley completely destroys everything: the cities, the valley, the people, and the vegetation and crops. You may recall all the way back in [Gen 13](#) when Abraham and Lot separate that this valley is described as a well watered place, “like the garden of the LORD.” But God’s judgement turns this garden valley into a lifeless desert.

In verse 26 we have the account of Lot's wife looking back and being turned into a pillar of salt. Back in verse 17, Lot was told to flee and to *not look back* and Lot's wife breaks this command and she falls under the judgement by being turned into a pillar of salt.

You can read ancient Jewish literature like the Apocrypha and Josephus and hear the legends surrounding this account. They claim that the pillar of salt was still standing in their day where you could go and learn from the disobedience of Lot's wife. Whether or not those legends are true is beside the point. When we come down to it, the Bible is filled with accounts and admonitions to not look back but to keep moving forward.

Consider the audience who would have been reading these stories. It was the Hebrews who had just been lead out of slavery in Egypt by Moses.

Moses is a man in the Bible who is commended for *not looking back*. [Hebrews 11:24-26](#) tells us that Moses, "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Rather he chose "to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin." Hebrews tells us that Moses did this because, "He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward." Unlike Lot's wife, Moses fled from destruction in obedience to God.

The same could not be said about those who Moses led. The generation that Moses led out of Egypt was always turning their back on Moses and the LORD desiring to return to Egypt. But in their case and in the case of Lot's wife such a desire is folly. That wicked generation desired to return to a civilization that God had destroyed. There was nothing to go back to but death and despair. Likewise Lot's wife turned back to Sodom only to see it's destruction.

In [Matthew 17](#), when Jesus is telling his own disciples to be on guard for the coming destruction of Jerusalem, He tells them to "remember Lot's wife." She was swept up in the destruction of Sodom and Jesus tells His disciples that they too can be swept away in God's judgement if they do not remember and learn from her example.

Likewise we too must remember Lot's wife. God has given His people, like he gave to Lot's family, a great salvation. God has rescued you from sin and judgement. But you must take heed as the book of Hebrews again tells us.

Hebrews 3:12-14 *ESV*

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

This passage from Hebrews comes directly after a quotation from [Psalm 95](#), a Psalm that we sing as we enter into worship each Lord's Day. [Psalm 95](#) is a Psalm that recalls Israel's

salvation from Egypt but also their sin in the wilderness. It calls those who hear it to *not harden their hearts*.

The temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil always seek to be a snare to you. Do not harden your hearts. Do not look back to world that is doomed for judgement. Rather, let us heed what Paul says to the Philippians.

Philippians 3:12-14 ESV

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Forget what lies behind you in Sodom and Egypt. Press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus!

Salvation by Association (vv. 27-29)

Verses 27-29 draw our attention back to the man who did just that. Abraham, the man who "went out, not knowing where he was going...For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God."

Abraham is the man of faith pressing on toward the upward call of God. And in verses 27-28 he goes out early in the morning when Sodom is being destroyed, "**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.**"

Abraham has just interceded with God to spare Sodom and Abraham now goes to see what has become of his intercession. God had promised Abraham that He would not destroy Sodom if there were 10 righteous people in Sodom, but [Gen 19](#) shows that there are not 10 righteous people in Sodom. Abraham sees the destruction but doesn't know that Lot has been saved.

But the salvation of Lot is described in verse 29. But the salvation of Lot is described in a unique way. Verse 29 states, "**When God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of their midst of the overthrow**".

The reason why God saved Lot is that "**He remembered Abraham.**" This language harkens back [Genesis 8](#) and the account of the Flood. [Genesis 8:1](#) states, "But God remembered Noah... And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided."

God has brought a similar judgement on Sodom and the cities of the plain that he brought in the Flood. Likewise, God's remembrance marks the deliverance from judgement.

Curiously it does not say, “God remembered Lot”, but that “God remembered Abraham.” Throughout the Bible there is a theme where the salvation of some is tied to their connection with God’s chosen servant. In the Flood, it was all those who were connected to Noah that survived. Here at Sodom, it was all those who were connected to Abraham that survive.

But this theme pops up elsewhere as well. For the sake of His covenant with David God spares the kingdom of Judah on a number of occasions. And most importantly of all, it is for the sake of Jesus, and the covenant that He established, that we are all remembered by God.

This remembrance comes up each week in our service when we come to the table. In the words of institution for the bread I say, “Having given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take. Eat. This is my body which is given for you. Do this as my memorial.”

There is a specific reason for that choice of words. After the flood, God placed the rainbow in the sky and told Noah that this was a memorial. Whenever God saw the rainbow in the sky it would remind Him of His promise to never flood the earth again. Whenever we break the bread at the table, we do so as a memorial. It reminds God that the judgement for sin was poured out when the body of Christ was broken on the cross so that we might live at peace with God.

God remembered Noah and his household was brought through the Flood. God remembered Abraham, and Lot was saved from Sodom. God remembers the work of Jesus our Lord, and we are delivered from the curse of the Fall.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN!