

# ABRAHAM HAD HIS PRAYER ANSWERED; LOT WAS SAVED AND SODOM DESTROYED: THE PICTURE OF BACKSLIDING FAITH GENESIS 19:23–29

## *Introduction*

Remember Lot. He had every advantage imaginable to know the LORD and to live life to the fullest.

- => He was taken in and reared by Abraham when Abraham first trusted God and began his journey of faith. But he apparently paid little attention to the testimony and witness of Abraham (Gen 12:4-5).
- => He was given the first choice of land by Abraham, but he chose selfishly and settled close to Sodom (Gen 13:5-18).
- => He was rescued from enslavement when captured by the invading army of kings from the East (Gen 14:12-16).

But instead of returning with Abraham, he chose to return to Sodom. Lot loved Sodom and the opportunities the city offered him both for business and personal pleasure. Lot coveted the city's bright lights, the opportunity for wealth, possessions, pleasure, and position. Scripture gives a graphic picture of Lot's love for Sodom, the declining stages he went through in moving closer and closer to Sodom and its carnal and wicked way of life:

- => Lot first of all *lifted up his eyes and looked upon* Sodom and the rich, fertile valley of the Jordan in which the city sat (Gen 13:10-11).
- => Lot then *chose to move, pitching his tent toward* Sodom (Gen 13:12-13).
- => Lot later *moved into* the city (Gen 14:12).
- => Lot finally is seen *sitting at the gate of Sodom*, which meant that he was most likely some city official (Gen 19:1).

Lot began the pilgrimage to the promised land with Abraham. But once there, he saw the bright lights and business opportunities of Sodom. Instead of focusing upon the heavenly city — the promised land — he looked and looked at Sodom until the attraction of the city consumed him. Eventually, Lot became one with the city and its ungodly people. Lot's life is a graphic picture of backsliding, a dangerous threat to us all. Lot was saved, genuinely saved. Scripture says so:

*2 Pet 2:7-8 And if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (For that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard).*

But Lot fell back, lived a carnal, fleshly life. He was right at home with the sinful and wicked of the earth. A disheartening picture. Nevertheless, a picture of warning, a graphic

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picture that warns us of the coming judgment upon all the backsliding believers and the wicked of this earth.

Henry Morris says this:

*What a perfect picture Lot exhibits of a modern-day carnal Christian! He thinks he has the best of both worlds — the eternal benefit of knowing the LORD as Saviour, but also all the temporal benefits that result from worldly influence and possessions, together with acceptance by and fellowship with men of the world. Their gross wickedness may vex his soul a bit, and he may not wish to enter into quite all of their activities, but in general he gets along with them just fine, and is quite pleased with himself that he does. A day of reckoning will come, however.* (Henry M. Morris. *The Genesis Record*, p. 346).

This is the subject of this important passage: *Abraham Had His Prayer Answered — Lot Was Saved and Sodom Destroyed: The Picture of Backsliding Faith*, Genesis 19:1-38.

- I. Picture 1: Lot's compromise with the world (vv. 1-3).
- II. Picture 2: Lot's depravity (vv. 4-11).
- III. Picture 3: Lot's powerless life and testimony (vv. 12-14).
- IV. Picture 4: Lot's desire to linger in the world (vv. 15-22).
- V. Picture 5: Lot's warning of judgment — a lesson for all (vv. 23-26).
- VI. Picture 6: Lot's deliverance — in answer to prayer (vv. 27-29).
- VII. Picture 7: Lot's tragic end — results of backsliding (vv. 30-38).

### **I. *Genesis 19:23–26 Lot's Warning of Judgment***

The fifth picture of backsliding is Lot's warning of judgment, a lesson for all of us.

1. The *compromising believer* lost everything (v. 23). Lot lost his home, his possessions, and all his wealth; but most tragic of all, he lost all of his family except two unmarried daughters. He had trusted the world, and now his world was gone.
2. The *depraved unbelievers* were judged; they suffered the condemnation of fire and brimstone (sulphur) (v. 24). Note these facts:
  - a. Four cities were actually destroyed, all the cities of the area: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim. Only Zoar was spared because of Lot (Deu 29:23, see Hos 11:8).
  - b. The Lord Himself rained the fire and brimstone or sulphur down upon the cities. That is, God caused the judgment. The fire and brimstone are said twice to have come from the Lord (v. 24).

H. C. Leupold says this:

*The "fire" which rained down from heaven may have been lightning. The "sulphur" may have been miraculously wrought and so have rained down together with the lightnings, although there is the other possibility that a huge*

*explosion of highly inflammable materials, including sulphur, deposited in the ground (cf. the "bitumen pits" of 14:10) may have cast these materials, especially the sulphur, high into the air so that they rained upon these cities, causing a vast conflagration. (H.C. Leupold. Exposition of Genesis, Vol. 1, p. 568).*

Henry Morris says this:

*It seems possible, therefore, that God triggered an earthquake along the great fault at this time, which released and exposed to the atmosphere vast quantities of combustible hydrocarbons and sulphur. At the same time, God sent "fire from heaven," which ignited the mixture in a great explosion and devastating fire. To Abraham, watching afar off with great concern ever since his intercessory prayer before the LORD, it seemed as though "the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace."*

*The "fire and brimstone" that fell from heaven possibly refers to the burning gas and sulphur that were blown into the air in the explosion and then fell back to the earth throughout the region. The most likely naturalistic explanation for the ignition of these materials probably would be that of a simultaneous electrical storm, in which case the lightning itself could also be described as "fire from heaven." Similar terminology is used in Job 1:16; Ezekiel 38:22, and elsewhere, for what probably are also violent atmospheric phenomena.*

*Since natural physical phenomena, divinely timed, do seem adequate to explain the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, perhaps we should interpret the story in this way. We do not want to exclude the possibility, however, that a specially created divine fire was sent supernaturally from heaven to ignite the region. The Bible does record other such things, as in the days of Gideon (Judges 6:21), Elijah (1 Kings 18:38), and others. It is interesting that the word for "brimstone" in the New Testament is the Greek theion, meaning literally "God's fire." The personal connection of God and the two angelic messengers with Sodom's destruction in itself tends to suggest that the "rain of brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven" was actually supernatural. There is certainly no reason for us to question either God's ability or the appropriateness of a true creative miracle in this situation. (Henry M. Morris. *The Genesis Record*, pp. 354-355).*

- c. Note that the LORD "overthrew" the cities (v. 25). The idea of "overthrow" is that of people standing against God: standing up in His face, cursing Him, standing up against Him in all their immorality, lawlessness and rebellion. Consequently, God had to overthrow them, cast them down in judgment.

**Thought 1.** How like the world today! Just think of the people within every city who stand against God and...

- curse Him
- commit immorality
- rebel against Him
- are lawless

The day is coming when God has to overthrow the cities of the earth, when He has to cast them down in judgment. God is going to judge every one of us.

**Mat 25:31-34, 41** *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.... Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.;”*

**2 Th 1:7-8** *And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

**Heb 9:27** *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*

**2 Pet 2:4-9** *For if God....he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (For that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard). If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.*

**2 Pet 3:3-10** *First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.*

**Jude 1:14-15** *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”*

## II. *Genesis 19:27–29 Lot's Deliverance in Answer to Prayer*

The sixth picture of backsliding is Lot's deliverance in answer to prayer. Lot and his two daughters — were saved only because of Abraham's prayer.

1. Note the prayer warrior's urgent anticipation. Abraham arose early to see what had happened. What he saw, no doubt, struck him with the deepest sorrow and emotional strain. The whole plain was filled with a dense smoke soaring up into the sky, a smoke so dense that it seemed to be furiously flowing up from a huge burning furnace, a furnace so large that it seemed to cover the whole area.
2. God's remembrance of Abraham's prayer is recounted. Note that Lot was not saved for his own sake: he had not followed God nor been a witness for God. He had lived for this world, lived for the bright lights, pleasures, money, wealth, property, position, honour and possessions of this world. He had lived a carnal, worldly, fleshly life. There was no reason for God to save and keep him upon this earth: he just was not a witness for God. In fact, he damaged and disgraced God's name. He shamed God, discredited Him and blemished the name of other believers, for he was living a hypocritical life. Lot was saved for one reason and for one reason only: Abraham, his uncle, had prayed for him; and God heard and answered his prayer (v. 29).

*James 5:16 The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

3. Lot's wife — the spouse of the backslider — loved the world and suffered the judgment of God (v. 26). Note that Lot's wife was "behind him." The idea is that she hesitated and had fallen some distance back. Lot's wife loved Sodom and the comfortable life she had been living. She was, no doubt, feeling the pain of leaving Sodom and having to give up...
  - the bright lights and social life of the city
  - her home and possessions
  - her friends and neighbours

She was, after all, one of the more prominent wives in the city, her husband being a city official, perhaps even the mayor. She was well known and liked, a member of all the major social clubs and functions of the city.

Perhaps she had lagged back because she questioned the warnings of judgment, longed to return, and debated whether to question Lot about returning. Whatever the reason, she had dropped back and was thinking about Sodom, her home and the comforts of the life she had been living. And then it happened: she looked back, and she immediately was turned into a pillar of salt (v. 26). What does this mean?

⇒ It could mean that God miraculously acted and judged Lot's wife by turning her into a pillar of salt.

- => It could mean that one of the volcanic explosions threw a salt deposit up into the air and God caused it to fall upon Lot's wife when she disobeyed.
- => It could mean that she failed to rush far enough to escape the onrushing lava from the volcanic eruptions. She was thus buried and petrified in the ash and other materials (salt materials). ■