

ABRAHAM HAD HIS PRAYER ANSWERED; LOT WAS SAVED AND SODOM DESTROYED: THE PICTURE OF BACKSLIDING FAITH GENESIS 19:01–38

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

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 19:01–03 Lot's Compromise with the World*

The first picture of backsliding is Lot's compromise with the world. Remember, the Lord had stayed behind with Abraham. Only the two angels went to Sodom. They arrived in the evening. Note two facts.

1. Lot sat in the gateway of Sodom. He was there for one of two reasons.
 - => Lot was either the mayor or a city official responsible for city government and for settling disputes between citizens. City officials, acting as judges, sat at the gate for that purpose (see Deut 21:19-21; 22:15; Ruth 4:1; Prov 31:23). Abraham had saved Sodom from foreign conquest (see Gen 14:1-24). Perhaps the citizens had honoured Lot, making him a city official because of what his uncle had done for them.
 - => Lot had compromised his values and was now living with the worldly. Perhaps he was at the gate, the public gathering place, either to conduct business or just pass the time away with the worldly. He was "walking in the counsel of the ungodly, standing in the way of sinners, and sitting in the seat of the scornful" (Psa 1:1; see Psa 69:12; 2 Pet 2:8).
2. Lot was a believer, consequently there was some inner goodness within him. There was more to Lot's invitation than just Eastern social tradition and kindness. There was

an urgency, an anxiety in his invitation: he insisted, “pressed...greatly” upon them to accept his invitation (v. 3). He knew the city and the people, the moral degradation. He knew the threat and danger to the strangers — the threat and danger that in fact happened (vv. 4-11). Note that a spiritual awareness, an inner goodness, is still seen even in the midst of Lot's carnality and failure.

The two angels probably refused the invitation at first because they had come to investigate the wickedness of the city or else out of politeness, not wishing to inconvenience Lot.

Thought 1. J. Vernon McGee gives a descriptive picture and application of the conversation between Lot and the angels:

*They had brought out something when they said, “We’ll stay on the street and just sleep in the park,” and Lot says to them, “You don’t do that in Sodom. It’s dangerous! Your life wouldn’t be worth a thing if you did that.” May I say that may be Los Angeles ought to change its name to Sodom. It would not be safe for you to sleep on the streets of Los Angeles; in fact, it is not safe at all to be on the streets of Los Angeles at night. Many women who live alone will not come out to church at night. One dear saint of God told me, “I just lock my door at dark, Brother McGee, and I do not open that door until the next morning at daylight. It’s not safe in my neighbourhood to even walk on the street.” The days of Sodom and Gomorrah are here again, and practically for the same reason. Lot says, “No, men, do not stay on the street. It wouldn’t be safe for you.” When he “pressed upon them,” they came in. (Vernon McGee. *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 1. p. 81)*

II. **Genesis 19:04–11** *Lot’s Depravity and Immorality*

The second picture of backsliding is Lot's depravity. The scene pictured here is shocking. It shows how utterly depraved the human heart can become. But it also shows how far believers can backslide, how carnal and fleshly-minded they can become. These verses give a graphic picture of Lot's depravity, as well as the depravity of the Sodomites.

1. Lot had chosen a godless, depraved environment when he moved to Sodom (vv. 4-5). Note that a mob of people from all over the city surrounded Lot's house. Both young and old burned with *unnatural lust*: they shouted out their desires for sex, for homosexual sex. The mob was not acting in secret; they were shouting aloud their cravings and sexual preference. They were out to commit homosexual rape against Lot's visitors.
2. Lot had made his home with the depraved and wicked of the earth, becoming one with them (vv. 6-7). What a tragic picture of backsliding! Note that Lot went outside to meet the mob and called them *brothers, friends* (v. 7). Lot knew these people: they were his day-to-day friends, acquaintances, neighbours, and business associates. He had lived among the worldly too long; he had no testimony before them. In their

minds, he was like them, one of them: loving the world and the things of the world. Thus they expected him to grant their wish.

3. Lot had become consumed with selfishness and compromise (v. 8). This is a horrible, unbelievable scene. Lot offered to give his daughters to the mob in exchange for the guests. How could he do this?

=> Was he trying to save his own life, standing there face to face with the mob, fearing their threats?

=> Was he so threatened and so fearful that he was in a confused state of mind?

=> Did he know that his guests were angels, and he was willing to sacrifice his two daughters to save them?

Scripture does not say, but whatever the case, Lot was only substituting one sin for another sin, the giving up of his daughters to satisfy the evil lusts of the mob. No doubt, being forced to have sex with so many men would have killed his daughters, and Lot would have known this. He was engulfed by a spirit of selfishness and evil compromise.

4. Lot had lived a hypocritical life: he had sat at the gate, judging and reproving the citizens of Sodom for their injustices while living a compromising and worldly life (v. 9). Scripture actually tells us this:

2 Pet 2:8 *For that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard.*

Lot had attempted to influence his fellow citizens for good: he had sat at the city gate as one of the ruling officials of the city, judging and censoring many; but he had lived a worldly, compromising life. Note that the mob actually accused Lot of living a hypocritical life, shouting that they would tolerate it no more. They began to attack him.

Note: a hypocritical, compromising believer — a backsliding believer — will usually be ridiculed, mocked and eventually rejected, just as Lot was.

5. Lot was delivered by the two angels (vv. 10-11), They struck the mob with some form of blindness and quickly opened the door and pulled Lot back into the house.

Thought 1. Henry Morris gives an excellent application of these verses to our day and time:

The fact that the old men as well as the young were driven by these lusts, and that, rather than practicing them in secret, they shouted their desires aloud in the streets, adds still another dimension to the enormity of the thing. No wonder God had told Abraham that “the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and their sin is very grievous” (18:20). In these modern days, after two thousand years of Christian teaching to which the Sodomites never had access, what must God think of the current revival of homosexuality, manifest in “gay liberation” movements

and political organizations, and even “gay” religious societies, not only among liberals, but even among some evangelicals? (Henry M. Morris. The Genesis Record, pp. 347-348)

Jer 6:15 *Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them,” says the Lord.*

Isa 3:9 *The look on their faces testifies against them; they parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! They have brought disaster upon themselves.*

Jude 1:7, 14-15 *In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire... “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.”*

GENESIS 19:04 SODOM

Sodom was located at the southern tip of the Dead Sea, and its ruins are thought to lie under the sea today. The city was destroyed because of sin, especially the sin of sexual perversion (Gen 13:13, see 18:20; 19:13, 24). The sin for which Sodom is known is homosexuality; in fact, the sin of homosexuality was so common in Sodom that it has become proverbial (sodomy). Sodomy — homosexuality and other forms of sexual perversion — is referred to throughout Scripture when sin and judgment are the subject.

1. The following is said about the sin of Sodom.

a. It is a sin that made men very wicked and sinful.

Gen 13:13 *Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.*

b. It is forbidden by law.

Deu 23:17 *No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute.*

c. It was a sin committed by some in Israel.

1 Kng 14:24 *There were even male prostitutes in the land; the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites.*

d. It was one of the enslaving sins of the ancient world, a sin that led to “all forms of unrighteousness.”

Rom 1:26-27, 32 *Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way*

the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion....Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

- e. It was a sin that debased and cheapened religion.

2 Kng 23:7 *He also tore down the quarters of the male prostitutes that were in the temple of the Lord, the quarters where women did weaving for Asherah.*

2. The following is said about the judgment of Sodom and of sodomites, homosexuals.

- a. The land was judged, purified of the sin.

1 Kng 15:12 *He expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols his ancestors had made.*

1 Kng 22:46 *He rid the land of the rest of the male shrine prostitutes who remained there even after the reign of his father Asa.*

- b. The worship centre (house of the Lord) was purified of the sin.

2 Kng 23:7 *He also tore down the quarters of the male prostitutes that were in the temple of the Lord, the quarters where women did weaving for Asherah.*

- c. The judgment of Sodom is a picture of the future judgment — the judgment yet to come.

Mat 10:15 *"I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrha on the day of judgment than for that town."*

Luke 17:29-30 *"But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulphur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed."*

2 Pet 2:6 *If he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;*

Jude 1:7 *In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.*

3. The Lord Himself, however, gave great hope to the sodomites, the homosexuals of this earth. He said...

- that Sodom was judged and destroyed because of sin, but that it would not have been destroyed if its people had repented.
- that Sodom and its people would answer for much in the day of judgment, but not for having neglected and rejected Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Note: how

much more judgment will fall upon sodomites (homosexuals) who are guilty of both sodomy (homosexuality) and of rejecting Christ.

But there is hope for every Sodomite: he or she can repent — turn away from their sin — and trust Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

Mat 11:23 *“And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.”*

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

Acts 3:19 *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*

Acts 8:22 *Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.*

Isa 55:7 *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

Ezek 18:21 *“But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die.”* □

III. **Genesis 19:12–14** *Lot's Life, A Powerless Testimony*

The third picture of backsliding is Lot's powerless testimony and life.

Lot was warned by the angels to save his family, for the city was to be destroyed because of its wickedness. Lot warned his family, but note what happened: they ridiculed and mocked him.

=> His message of judgment was not believed.

=> His own personal testimony was meaningless: he had lived a carnal, worldly life too long before his family. There was no difference between his life and the lives of the worldly. He had failed to point his family — his children — to God.

Thought 1. We must not fail to lead our children to Christ nor fail to teach them the ways of the LORD.

(1) Lot failed — miserably failed — to obey God's instructions in rearing his children.

Deu 6:7 *Talk about them [God's commandments] when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

Prov 22:6 *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

***Eph 6:4** Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

(2) Lot failed to do what Abraham did: teach the ways of the LORD to his family.

***Gen 18:19** For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.*

IV. Genesis 19:15–22 The Worldliness of Lot

The fourth picture of backsliding is Lot's desire to linger in the world. This is a descriptive — picture of how far a believer can backslide. A believer can actually fall in love with the world despite the severe warnings of imminent judgment.

1. There was the urgent warning (v. 15). The two angels warned Lot: he needed to hurry, take his wife and two daughters and get out; flee the city lest they all be consumed.
2. Lot lingered (v. 16). The very thought of leaving home, business, and possessions — his attachment to the world and the things of the world — made it very difficult for him to leave. But God had mercy upon him: the two angels grabbed the hands of Lot, his wife, and daughters leading them out of the city.
3. There was an incredible spiritual weakness (vv. 17-20). What happened now was almost unbelievable, that a believer could slip back so far that he would crave the world...
 - despite his having just been saved from a catastrophic death by the glorious mercy of God
 - despite his facing impending judgment

When the angels led Lot and his family outside the city, the angels warned Lot again and urged him to escape for his life, to flee to the mountains out of the plain lest he be consumed (v. 17). But Lot pleaded against God's will (v. 18):

- => Lot claimed to be physically incapable of reaching the mountain, that he might not be able to climb it in time to escape the destruction (v. 19). But this was a camouflage, self-deception for a worldly heart. God was saving him from the coming judgment, and God would have strengthened him for the journey to the mountain. Lot knew this.
- => Lot pleaded for the right to escape to a city nearby, to Zoar (v. 20). Tragic, pitiful, sorry — how sorry a person Lot had become, begging to stay close to Sodom, to the comforts of the world he had known. Remember, Lot was a wealthy businessman with large herds and holdings. Perhaps he thought his herds might be spared (after all, they were outside the city) if he could get God to spare Zoar and let him live there. Whatever the case, Lot was still trying to hold on to the world, to its possessions and comforts, to hold on even after God had just done so much for him. And Lot was very aware of the mercy God was showing him. He clearly said so (v. 19).

4. God now accepted Lot's choice: he was allowed to live in Zoar and to continue living a worldly, carnal life (vv. 21-22). God pleaded no more; He gave Lot up to his life of carnality and worldliness. But God went ahead and saved Lot, saved him because of Abraham's prayer. (See note, Gen 18:22-26.)

Prov 14:14 *The faithless will be fully repaid for their ways, and the good man rewarded for his.*

Mat 24:12 *Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.*

Gal 4:9 *But now that you know God — or rather are known by God — how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?*

2 Tim 4:10 *For Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me.*

Heb 10:38 *But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.*

2 Pet 2:20-21 *If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.*

Rev 2:4 *"Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love."*

GENESIS 19:21-22 ZOAR

The name of the city *Zoar* means *little*. Zoar was a small Canaanite city that had been founded close to Sodom and Gomorrah.

=> Zoar was one of the cities attacked and defeated by an invading army from the East, but its citizens were saved by Abraham (Gen 14:2, 8).

=> Zoar was one of the cities God had appointed to be destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah. However, it was saved in answer to Lot's prayer (Gen 19:22).

=> Zoar was a part of the promised land (Deut 34:3).

=> Zoar was a city to which fugitives fled (Isa 15:5).

=> Zoar is to be judged and know the wrath of God (Jer 48:34). □

V. **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."*

VI. 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).

VII. *Genesis 19:30–38 The Tragic Results of Backsliding*

The seventh picture of backsliding is Lot's tragic end, the results of backsliding.

1. There was fear. Lot and his two daughters had gone to Zoar, but just how long they stayed there is not known. All we know is that while there, Lot began to *fear*. Fear what? Did he fear the citizens of Zoar? Did they look with suspicion upon Lot and resent him, wondering if he was somehow to be blamed for the destruction of Sodom and the other cities? This is a possible explanation, but the context seems to indicate that he feared more judgment from God, that Zoar might also be destroyed by God. Zoar sat right in the middle of the destruction: Sodom and Gomorrah sat north and the other two cities sat south of Zoar. Consequently, mass destruction surrounded Zoar. It had been a flourishing city, but now the fertile land and the cities that had surrounded it and provided commerce were destroyed. Zoar's wealth and markets were gone, the economy bankrupt. It was no longer a desirable place to live. Lot, in seeing all the surrounding destruction and knowing that Zoar sat right in the middle of the devastation, probably remembered that God had spared Zoar only because of him. God had originally planned to judge and destroy Zoar as well. Thus Lot began to fear the judgment of God upon Zoar so he fled the city. Sin had brought judgment upon Sodom, and Lot's backsliding and worldly life had caused him to lose everything he had including his family. Now his backsliding caused even more suffering, the suffering of fear — the fear of more judgment from God.

Thought 1. Backsliding always brings the judgment of God upon a person; consequently, a backsliding believer needs to fear, fear enough to repent and turn back to God.

2. There was humiliation. Imagine having to live in a cave after being a city official or mayor of one of the leading cities of the world. That was Lot. He had lost everything, including his self-esteem and the respect of others. He was a devastated man: brought low, cast down, crushed, utterly humiliated, shamed, disgraced and probably confused, confounded and full of guilt. Lot had fallen to the bottom of the scale of human existence.

Thought 1. Worldliness — backsliding — will defeat any believer and eventually humiliate him.

3. There was a bad influence upon children (vv. 31-36). This is a sordid, shameful scene. But it shows the most tragic result of a backslidden life, the awful effect backsliding has upon children. Lot's two daughters, living in the cave out in the middle of the mountains, began to worry if they would ever marry and bear children. Thus they plotted the most immoral scheme imaginable: to get their father drunk, have sex with him and bear children. Note that the older sister carried out the scheme first (v. 33) and then influenced her younger sister to do the same (vv. 34-35). Immoral thoughts and plans, drunkenness and sexual impurity (incest), children misleading children into sin and shame — all due to the fact that Lot had lived a worldly and backslidden life before his daughters. True, they were virgins until this event: he had given them some moral training (see v. 8). But he had reared them in a worldly and wicked environment, in the social atmosphere of a city official that, no doubt, included drunkenness, dancing and other activities that led to loose behaviour. Lot himself apparently had loose morals, for there was only one place the daughters could have gotten the wine to make their father drunk: from him. He must have brought the wine out of Sodom when he fled the city. Imagine! Fleeing for your life and being able to save only what you can carry on your back and choosing wine to be one of the few items you save. Lot's backslidden state was severe indeed. The example he had set before his family through the years was a sorry, pathetic example. No wonder these two young women went astray: all they had ever seen, despite some moral teaching, was an environment that allowed loose living that was socially acceptable to the higher society of business and government leaders.

Prov 22:6 *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

Eph 6:4 *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

4. There was trouble for future generations (vv. 37-38). The two daughters gave birth...
 - the older to a son named Moab, who became the father of the Moabite people
 - the younger to a son named Ben-ammi, who became the father of the Ammonite people

Both of these nations were to become bitter enemies and oppose Israel (the followers of God) in future generations. They eventually — down through the ages — intermixed with the Arabs as did many of the peoples throughout the Middle East region.

***Exo 34:7** Maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.*

***Jer 32:18** You show love to thousands but bring the punishment for the parents' sins into the laps of their children after them. Great and mighty God, whose name is the Lord Almighty. ■*

GENESIS 19:30–38 LOT'S JOURNEY OF BACKSLIDING

Note these facts about Lot's journey of backsliding.

1. He started out with the same heritage and environment as Abraham, with the same opportunity as Abraham (Gen 11:27, 31; 12:1-4).
 - a. He was a believer, a righteous man — the same as Abraham (Gen 15:6; 2 Pet 2:7).
 - b. He followed Abraham, the example of the righteous, for a while (Gen 12:1-4).
 - c. He moved among and joined the worldly (see Gen 13:12-13; 14:11-12; 19:1).
 - d. He refused to heed the warning and deliverance of God, refused to break from the worldly (see Gen 14:11-24, esp. 16).
2. He allowed his faith to degenerate, to become carnal.
 - a. He acted selfishly (see Gen 13:5-11, esp. 10-11).
 - b. He looked toward worldliness (see Gen 13:10-11).
 - c. He moved among and joined the worldly (see Gen 13:12-13; 14:11-12; 19:1).
 - d. He refused to heed the warning and deliverance of God; refused to break from the worldly (see Gen 14:11-24, esp. 16).
3. He lacked the courage to break away from the world.
 - a. He suffered a vexed spirit because of evil surroundings (2 Pet 2:8).
 - b. He rebuked and attempted to correct evil (see Gen 19:1-3, 6-9).
 - c. He still hesitated and refused to separate from the world (see Gen 19:1-3, 16, 18-22).
4. He ended his life in shame and oblivion, never to be heard from again, and he left a shameful heritage and influence for his children (Gen 19:30-38). □