

Genesis, Part 19

Two sessions ago before we took our little side trip into the subjects of unknown sin and fellowship, we saw Abraham meet three angels on their way to Sodom, one of which was a theophany, a pre-incarnate manifestation of Jesus Christ. Our Lord delivered a message to Abraham that come the following year he and Sarah would be the proud parents of a baby boy. Sarah met the news with an inward laugh because she was well past the age of conceiving. Was that doubt or glee? You decide, but “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

After the meeting over a shared meal, the three visitors departed and, as was the custom, Abraham walked along with them to see them off. The two angels went ahead while the Lord remained behind with Abraham and revealed to him what He was there for to determine if Sodom and the other cities of the plain were as evil as He was hearing. Of course, He already knew the answer to that. Our Lord revealed to Abraham that these wicked cities faced judgment and mass destruction for their sins.

Knowing that his nephew Lot and his family resided in Sodom, Abraham appealed to the Lord for the wicked cities and bargained with Him to hold off judgment if as few as 10 righteous people were found there, to which the Lord agreed He would before He continued on His journey.

The Incident in Sodom

Genesis 19:1 The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth and said, “My lords, please turn aside to your servant’s house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way.” They said, “No; we will spend the night in the town square.”

It is late in the evening (before sundown) and the two angels arrive at the gate of Sodom and are immediately noticed by Lot who is there. The gate of a city was often the place where business was conducted and judgments were rendered by the elders of the city or town. The fact that the Scriptures mention Lot’s presence at the gate suggests that he had attained some

standing in the city, perhaps even an elder. To have been so accepted, Lot must have made some compromises with the lifestyle and morality of the city. So there he sits—an apparent believer, yet able to join the crowd and immerse himself in the culture of sin.

It was customary for citizens of a city to offer hospitality to traveling strangers for the night. This greatly exaggerated Middle Eastern idea of hospitality that we might offer our homes to total strangers may seem strange to us today. But in this time and culture, Motel 6 and Hampton Inn had not yet come into existence. There were sometimes inns with rooms, or beds, or even a corner on the floor near the fireplace for hire, but they were few and far between, nor often particularly desirable places to spend the night.

Fearing for the well-being of the two strangers, he immediately invited them to spend the night in his home. This eagerness on the part of Lot begs the question of why was he so eager. What did he see in these two “strangers”? I think we can safely assume they didn’t outwardly look like our idea of what angels look like; that is they were not glowing bright white and pure-like with wings and halos about their heads. They probably looked like and were dressed like ordinary men except their clothing might have suggested wealth, and they were more likely very handsome men. This is suggested by what I can only call “over-the-top mad lust” for them by the Sodomite males of the town, as we shall see shortly. Lot’s reaction to them suggests that he understood that these two would be the object of attention by the Sodomites and were in great danger. Did he understand that they were angels? That doesn’t seem to be indicated by the text beyond Lot’s eagerness to provide shelter and safety for them. They initially refuse Lot’s hospitality and indicate they will simply sleep in the town square.

Gen 19:3 But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

4 But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house.

5 And they called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them.” 6 Lot went out to the

men at the entrance, shut the door after him, 7 and said, “I beg you, my

brothers, do not act so wickedly. 8 Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.”

Note that Lot had lost his tent. At this time he lived in a house (v. 3), and there is no mention of the altar. It was evening when the angels arrived, and most of the chapter events take place at night. Lot was not walking in the light. Not only had worldly Lot lost his tent and altar and his fellowship with God, but he had also lost his spiritual standards.

2 Peter 2:7 and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked ⁸ (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard)

This First Peter passage indicates that Lot was indeed a saved man and found living among the wicked Sodomites difficult and an affront to his own righteousness. “Their lawless deeds that he saw and heard” suggests their wickedness was out in the open – seen and heard of by all. His “righteous soul” was “tormented” by it. Lot was a man confused—torn between his upbringing in the faith and his enjoyment of the world.

Lot pressed the visitors harder and insisted they spend the night in the safety of his home. They relented, and Lot took them home where he prepared a “feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate”. “Feast” is the Hebrew *mishteh* /*mish·teh*/ and means a feast or banquet and suggests they had something to eat besides just unleavened bread.

What follows is a sickening scene that demonstrates the degradation of this city. Before they went to bed for the night the Sodomites showed up at Lot’s house. The text suggests it was *all* the male citizens of Sodom, and they surrounded Lot’s house. I don’t know how large Sodom was, but even if it was merely a small town, that is a lot of people.

They called out for Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them.” That word translated as

“know” is *yada*´ /*yaw·dah*/ and means to know, understand, be wise, or know by experience. It refers to carnal knowledge here. These Sodomites did not want to just have fellowship, kick back and have a few brews; they wanted to have homosexual sex with the two handsome men in Lot’s home. Considering the number of Sodomites involved, we are talking gang rape here. The fact that Lot offered his two virgin daughters instead supports this interpretation.

I previously mentioned the somewhat exaggerated Middle Eastern idea of hospitality. Those who reject the interpretation that the men of Sodom were homosexuals and that God destroyed the city because of perverse homosexuality say that the men clamoring for the two strangers were merely exhibiting poor hospitality. They claim this is the reason God destroyed Sodom and the other cities on the plain. However, their homosexual desires for the two men cannot be denied because Lot desperately offers his daughters to them instead. And they were engaged to be married (v. 16).

It is hard to consider this act by Lot, of offering his two virgin daughters, with anything but contempt for him and his actions. Lot was a righteous man with a warped sense of value (19:8). But why did he do such a horrible thing? His actions are difficult to understand, much less justify. Several factors, however, should be recognized.

The situation was desperate and dangerous. Lot did not have time to think through his actions. which must be seen as the product of sheer desperation. Furthermore, the hospitality code at that time compelled the host to do all within his power to protect the safety of those who entered his home. Two other factors should be considered. If the two girls were those who had “married” (engaged to) Sodomite men, perhaps he thought they would be safe. They would not dare harm girls engaged with their fellow citizens. In Bible days a betrothed woman was considered “married” and her “husband” was regarded as a son-in-law by her family. Finally, Lot was resorting to the principle of the lesser of evils. He regarded a heterosexual rape, as bad as that is, to be less evil than an unnatural sex act. Regardless, none of these “explanations” for his actions leads one to excuse the act or view it in a favorable light.

Lot is a very spiritually confused man, a believer who is trying to make peace with sin while living amid wanton, perverse sinners. But even having said what can be said in defense of Lot, his conduct in this situation is reprehensible. One cannot avoid sin with sin! Nonetheless, this lapse must be put in the context of Lot's generally righteous life. He was tormented by the filthy conduct of the Sodomites.

Gen 19:9 But they said, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot and drew near to break the door down. ¹⁰ But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door. ¹¹ And they struck with blindness the men who were at the entrance of the house, both small and great so that they wore themselves out groping for the door.

The statement "This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them" is alluding to Lot being a foreigner with aspirations to be an elder at the gate and judge among the Sodomites. The Sodomites resented Lot as a newcomer, and like all sinners, they resented his righteousness which condemned their lawless acts. They threaten to do worse to him than they intended for the two angels.

They pressed against Lot as they pushed toward the door. The angels reached out pulled Lot inside and slammed the door. They smote the attackers with blindness. "They wore themselves out groping for the door" suggests that didn't stop them. In their "over-the-top mad lust" I mentioned above, the Sodomites continued their attacks in a blind search for the door until finally they became weary and retired from the house.

Gen 19:12 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.

The angels announce what is about to happen to Sodom, that it is about to be destroyed. They urged Lot to take all of his relatives out of the city, for they had a commission to destroy the place. The wickedness of the city cried out before the face of the Lord for judgment. Lot believed the message and he “went out” to warn his sons-in-law but he could not convince them. They thought it was funny!

Gen 19:15 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.

The two angels had to physically remove Lot and his family and take them out of the city. It is interesting to note that not even ten righteous people were found in Sodom. Only four were brought out.

Gen 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.” 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.

But even after he was delivered, Lot wrung a concession out of the angels. It sounds like Lot didn’t think they could make it to the hills in time and suggested they be allowed to go to the nearby town of Zoar, which means “a little one” (vv. 18–22). Since Zoar was also slated to be destroyed like Sodom it was spared because Lot wanted to go there.

This scene would always remind Israel of Lot, lingering and halting, being dragged to safety then returning into wickedness (Zoar). Why do some of God's people fall in with the corrupt world rather than willingly flee a society destined for destruction?

God Destroys Sodom

Gen 19:23 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.

The destruction was supernatural. "Yahweh rained fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah." Four towns in the plain south of the Dead Sea were destroyed at this time (Deut 29:23). The area became a barren waste where nothing grew. Topographical changes resulting from the overthrow of these cities brought the ultra-salty waters of the Dead Sea down over that region which once was very fertile.

The destruction of the cities was a miracle, but God likely used physical elements near at hand to effect it. The plain contained deposits of asphalt (Gen 14:10). This substance could have easily developed enormous pressures of flammable gasses beneath the crust of the earth. An earthquake probably triggered an explosion that propelled heavenward huge quantities of sulfur, which also abounds in the region. The mass of gas and sulfur could have been ignited by lightning thus creating the rain of fire and brimstone (sulfur). The dense smoke (19:28) Abraham saw was caused by the burning sulfur (v. 24).

The Apostle Peter saw in the Sodom narrative both warning and encouragement. The ashes of that place were an eternal warning to those who lived ungodly lives. The rescue of Lot, on the other hand, was an illustration to the godly of how the Lord can deliver his own out of temptation (2 Pet. 2:4–9).

Lot's wife gazed back intently and was changed into a pillar of salt, a monument to her disobedience. She must have been behind the others as they fled the city. Perhaps she was not making a determined effort to leave. Her heart was still in Sodom! In disobedience to the instructions of the angels, she longingly looked back to the city. Overcome by the sulfur fumes, she collapsed and died. Before her body had time to decay she became salt-encrusted—a pillar of salt (19:26). The text does not necessitate the view that she instantaneously was converted into a salt pillar. In any case, Jesus directed his disciples to remember Lot's wife (Luke 17:32). Christians who are tempted to look back to the world from which they were delivered should remember her opportunity, her stupidity, and her destruction.

Lot's wife "looked back," and the Hebrew is *nabat* /*naw·bat*/ which means to look but stronger than a mere glance, that is, to show regard to, pay attention to, consider. She, like the rich young ruler after her, loved her material possessions and her societal position more than she loved the Lord. Maybe Lot's wife is the most modern of all the characters in the account. Her life, it seemed, consisted of the abundance of her possessions. Is that true of us? Jesus says, "Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it" (Luke 17:32–33).

Though God judged the sinners in the cities of the plain, He also remembered Abraham, that is, God remembered his request (18:23–32) and saved Lot from the catastrophe.

Lot and His Daughters

Gen 19:30 Now Lot went up out of Zoar and lived in the hills with his two daughters, for he was afraid to live in Zoar. So he lived in a cave with his two daughters. ³¹ And the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old,

and there is not a man on earth to come into us after the manner of all the earth. ³² Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father.” ³³ So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father. He did not know when she lay down or when she arose. ³⁴ The next day, the firstborn said to the younger, “Behold, I lay last night with my father. Let us make him drink wine tonight also. Then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve offspring from our father.” ³⁵ So they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. ³⁶ Thus both the daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father. ³⁷ The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day. ³⁸ The younger also bore a son and called his name Ben-ammi. He is the father of the Ammonites to this day.

These verses portray the pathetic end of a righteous man who had compromised with the world. After begging the angels to allow him to go to Zoar, Lot must have seen the wickedness there as in Sodom and come to his senses. Fearing that Zoar too would be destroyed, Lot and his two daughters chose to live in a cave in the mountains. The daughters feared that in that isolated area, they would be deprived of male companionship and thus die childless. The girls contrived a plan to get their father drunk, lie with him, and raise up seed by him. They convinced themselves that the terrible deed which they conceived would also be in the best interests of their father, “that we may preserve offspring from our father” (v. 32).

The plan worked. Lot was so intoxicated that he did not know when the girls lay down and when they arose. Both became pregnant. Lot sinned by allowing his daughters to get him drunk. How utterly guilt-stricken he must have been to discover his daughters were with child. The girls had been removed from Sodom, but Sodom had not been removed from the girls—or their father.

A footnote to this sordid narrative relates that the sons born to this incestuous union were Moab and Ben-Ammi. This was the origin of the

Moabites and Ammonites, two of Israel's nearest neighbors who figure so prominently in later Biblical history.

Homosexuality and the Bible

This subject is one of much debate today. The practice of homosexual acts has become much more open in our society and is seen by many as a perfectly acceptable, alternative lifestyle. Those who are "Sodomites" and their supporters argue that God made them that way.

No, God did not make them that way.

Rom 8:5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

Gal 5:1 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Gal 5:24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

The word translated as "flesh" is *sarx* and it refers to the soft substance of the living body. It is often translated as "carnal" (fleshly) referring to one's sinful character, our "animal nature," our sin nature sometimes called the "Old Sin Nature" because it came into existence with Adam's sin. The sin nature is inherited from the male.

Rom 5:2 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned

The old sin nature is the genetic home for the imputation of Adam's original sin at physical birth causing real spiritual death. Real spiritual death is separation from God in a state of total depravity. The old sin nature, genetically coded in the cell structure of the body, is the source of all inner

temptation. While the soul of man comes from God, the old sin nature originates from the original sin of Adam in the Garden.

While both the man and the woman are carriers of the old sin nature, the transmission of the old sin nature occurs only through twenty-three male chromosomes passed down from the man. The fact that Jesus did not have a human father is why He was born without the imputation of Adam's sin or a sin nature. Because of the natural process of meiosis and polar body readying the egg for fertilization, the female ovum throws off twenty-three contaminated chromosomes, leaving twenty-three uncontaminated chromosomes. The Holy Spirit, in fertilizing the ovum of Mary with twenty-three perfect chromosomes, therefore eliminated the genetic formation of the old sin nature.

Our sin nature is the source of most of our temptations and all of our sins. The unsaved must rely on human conscience, a set of learned norms and standards, and knowledge of the consequences of immoral acts to resist temptation. The Church Age believer has the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit to resist temptation, but that power must be exercised by the human will.

Each individual has a different sin nature that has strengths and weaknesses (trends) that are also different from others. If the trend is toward self-righteous arrogance and legalism, the fragments of life include slander, gossip, maligning, judging, and legalistic Christian activism. If the trend is toward lasciviousness and lawlessness, the sins tend toward sexual and even criminal acts.

Because of these assorted trends of the sin nature your sin weaknesses are likely different from mine. In the privacy of your own soul think of the sin(s) you must confess most often, think of your weakness, what tempts you so easily. If you are honest with yourselves, you can easily see what I am talking about. Those who are homosexuals have a weakness for that in their sin natures, thus they genuinely feel they were "made that way by God," but they were not. They are that way because of the fallen and broken nature of man passing on that genetically coded brokenness to his descendants.

How does God feel about homosexuality?

The Scriptures have a lot to say about it. Let's begin with the Law. *But ...*

Gal 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Rom 6:14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Paul says we are not under the Law. That is correct as long as we consider the Mosaic Covenant (the Law) as a system given to Israel, a fallen people, to manage Israel, and for Israel to have a relationship with God. The Law was divided into three codices. They are:

1. The social code regulated how Israelites were to relate to each other and other nations.
2. The worship code regulated how Israelites were to worship and relate to God.
3. The moral code that regulated moral behavior. The Decalog (Ten Commandments) is the most well-known part of the moral code.

Paul says we are not under the Law. That is correct because Church Age believers do not relate to God through the Law but rather through the indwelling Holy Spirit, a benefit that only a few enjoyed during the Age of the Law (also called the Age of Israel). There was no universal indwelling of the Holy Spirit during the Age of Israel like we have today in the Church Age. Individual Israelites had to meet the terms of the Law by human effort alone. We have the power of the indwelling Spirit to lead a moral and righteous life. Israel had only the motivation of blessing if they met the terms of the Law and discipline if they did not. We have the grace of the indwelling Holy Spirit – we are under Grace and not the Law, and with that power we can enjoy victory over sin that was not possible under the Law.

Gal 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

While we are not subject to the social and worship codices of the Law we remain under the Moral Code which has been in place since long before Israel even came into existence. This moral code was being revealed to and required of mankind as far back as Adam and Eve. So, we may not be

under the law but we are still under the requirements of morality representing God's perfect righteousness that was codified in the Law.

And God says ...

Lev 18:22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

Lev 20:13 If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination.

In Leviticus, where we see the moral code clarified, it clearly says if "a man lies with a male as with a woman, it is an abomination." There is no getting around it. "Abomination" is *tow'ebah /to·ay·baw/* means unclean or wicked. Simply put it is against nature and wrong.

Rom 1:26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. ²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

1 Tim 1:8 Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine

And to make it clear to us that what was going on in Sodom was indeed homosexual acts and not simply a failure to be hospitable, we have this in Jude in the New Testament.

Jude 7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Okay, it is a sin! Is it any worse than any other sin? All sins are an affront to God's perfect righteousness. None are less or more of a sin than others. All will damage the relationship a believer has with God. This one is, however, called an abomination. In Hebrew that is *shiqquts* /*shik-koots*/ which means detestable thing.

What do we, as believers, do about it? Other than using the power of the Holy Spirit to "not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Gal 5:16), we should not judge others or spurn other sinners unless their sin is open and blatant, they refuse to repent, and it becomes a problem for our witness to the lost. We should be witnessing to them. We must live among sinners but not adopt the way of sinners and compromise our own righteousness, as Abraham and Lot did. Christ had fellowship with sinners but he did not embrace or excuse their sins. We are to be witnesses to others in a world ruled by Satan. We should hate the sin but show love to the sinner and draw them to Christ. It is then the job of the Holy Spirit to deal with their sins just as it is His responsibility to deal with *our* sinfulness. Regarding that last point ...

1 John 1:8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.