

## Genesis 19

The theme of the Bible is the salvation of man through Jesus Christ to the glory of God. To speak of salvation is to speak of sin, which requires salvation. Sin overwhelmed the world earlier in man's history and God punished the world by destroying nearly all of it. Yet, God promised not to destroy the world with water again. In Genesis 18-19, we see God concentrating His judgment just on the cities that are particularly sinful; in this case, Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet, in the middle of this terrible destruction, we have the first reference (18:19) to a beautiful, biblical word "*chesed*," which is often translated as "lovingkindness" or "steadfast love" or even "loyalty." I have chosen to translate the word "loving loyalty."

Sodom has become infamous for its moral depravity. Jesus suggests that judgment will be more tolerable for Sodom than it will be for someone who rejects the testimony of the Spirit about Him (Luke 10:12). It is last mentioned in the book of Revelation, the last communication from the God of heaven. In that book, John uses Sodom as a picture of the depravity of the city of Rome (11:8) and it will suffer the same fate in the hands of God.

### TRANSLATION - 19:1-9:

**1** They came the two angels to Sodom in the evening and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom and Lot looked and arose to meet them and he bowed the nostrils to the earth. **2** And he said, "Behold, please, My lords, turn aside please to the house of your servant and spend the night and wash your feet and you can get up early and you can go on your way. And they said, "No, because in the square we will spend the night." **3** He strongly urged them and they turned aside to him. So they came to his house and he made for them a banquet and unleavened bread he baked and they ate.

**4** Before they laid down then the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, from the young to the old, all the people from the edges. **5** Then they called to Lot and said to him, "Where [are] the men who came to you tonight? Bring them to us to let us know them."

**6** So Lot went out to them at the opening, but the door he shut after him. **7** And he said, "Please, do not, my brothers, do evil. **8** Behold, please, to me [there are] two daughters which have not known a man... Let me bring out, please, them to you all. Then do to them as the good in your eyes. Only to the men, these do not do a thing because therefore they came in the shadow of my roof."

**9** They said, "Approach farther." And they said, "The one [who] came to sojourn even he will judge to judge now! We will do evil to you more than them." And they pressed into the man, into Lot exceedingly and they approached to break the door.

### WORDS:

"Bowed" (verse 1) first appeared in 18:1; see "Words" there. It can be used to translate "worship." The word "nostrils" (277 times) is obviously a literal translation. Lot bowed his body to the ground, in a sign of polite respect for the strangers. The word can also signify, metaphorically in some contexts, anger. "Turn aside" (verse 2; 298 times) can mean "to turn aside, to turn off, to leave, to desist, to remove." "Spend the night" (71 times) means to "lodge, stay, or dwell." "Rise up early" is all one word, used 65 times. "Square" is used 43 times and can be translated also as "road."

"Strongly" (verse 3) translates the adverb earlier translated "exceedingly" or "very." "Urged" (verses 3, 9) carries the overtones of urging *strongly*. "Banquet" is used 46 times, but 20 times are found just in Esther. "Unleavened bread" is used 53 times and will become most closely associated with the Feast of Passover. "Baked" is used 25 times. "Lay down" (verse 4; 213 times) is used densely at the end of the chapter, seven times from 19:32-35. "Let us know" (verse 5) uses the verb "to know" in a sexual sense as we have seen before (4:1, 17, 25). Of the 948 occurrences of the verb, it is used in a sexual sense fifteen times. When the verb has a direct object, as it does here, it means sexual relationships. Moses and Lot are not referring to

homosexual *rape* since the OT has ways of describing rape (Gen. 34:2; 2 Sam. 13:14; Deut. 22:25-27). They are wanting to have a homosexual relationship with the visitors.

#### GRAMMAR:

“He will judge to judge” (verse 9) is the emphatic infinitive absolute with the imperfect.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

The destruction recorded here in chapter 19 happened probably in the southern area of the Dead Sea. For information on these cities, see the “Archaeology” section under 13:6-11 and 14:1-6. Compare 13:10.

#### COMMENTS:

Lot was sitting at the gate of the city, a place where court was held and business was conducted. It suggests a place of importance and influence. The two angels, who had been with Jehovah God in chapter 18, arrive to fulfill God’s will in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. It was approximately forty miles from Mamre (18:1) to the place where scholars suggest Sodom was located. The angels traveled that distance from mid-afternoon (18:1) until evening (19:1), suggesting supernatural movement since it would have taken man probably two days to travel. Lot shows a hospitality very similar to his uncle’s in chapter 18. Notice how frequently the particle “please” is used in this context, nine times: 19:2, 7-8, 18-20. We do not have as much details about the “banquet” Lot prepared for the men, as we did Abraham’s. The unleavened bread suggests Lot did not want to take time to prepare other bread; he wanted to feed his visitors quickly.

The men of Sodom, “from the edges,” that is, from every part, “young and old” surrounded Lot’s house to intimidate him into allowing the men of Sodom to “know” the visitors. It is simply impossible, being consistent with the text, to ignore this as a reference to homosexuality. It does not matter whether it is consensual or not; it is “going after strange flesh” (Jude 7).

The fact that Lot refers to their behavior as “evil,” shows that the behavior, whether consensual or not, was still regarded as displeasing in the eyes of God. Our Christian sensibilities are offended that Lot would offer his two daughters to them for their sexual fulfillment, just as we were offended when Abraham offered Sarah as a spouse to Pharaoh, to save his own skin in chapter 12. Yet, for whatever reason, in Lot’s eyes, sparing his visitors was more morally imperative than sparing his daughters. Also, whatever else we might say about Lot’s morality, the fact that he shut the door behind him (verse 6), with him outside, to protect his guests shows his courage.

The Sodomites were offended, accusing Lot of wanting to be their judge, in very strict terms. Yet, they had allowed Lot to sit in their gate, as if he *were* a judge to judge them (19:1)! So, perhaps the Sodomites really never accepted Lot as one of their own, or they might be turning their backs on him now because he is “judging” their behavior as evil (vs 9). So, they moved toward Lot to do him even greater harm than they had thought to do to the visitors, pressing him toward the door.

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - Once Lot had chosen to “pitch his tent” toward Sodom (13:12) and find a house in Sodom (14:12), he has found himself backed into the corner. He has visitors and knows the morality of his neighbors. They have come to engage in homosexual relationships with his visitors, which Lot sees as worse than having a relationship with his own daughters. Perhaps *knowing* the men were homosexual, he does not really fear for his daughters’ lives. But, the Sodomites are not taking “no” for an answer.

*Moses’ Contemporaries* - Homosexuality will be condemned in the Law of Moses in the clearest terms (Lev. 18:22, 24; 20:13, 23).

*Later Hebrew writers* - We see the same set of moral values among the Israelites later in their history (Judges 19:22-24). For critiques of Sodom in the prophets, see Isaiah 3:9; Jeremiah 23:14; Ezekiel 16:49-50 and its immediate context (16:43-58).

*NT writers* - The NT also condemns homosexuality (Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10). Some ignorantly argue that Jesus did not condemn homosexuality, but that is not true. When Jesus defined the proper relationship as between a man and a woman (Matt. 19:1-9), He implicitly condemned all other relationships, including the homosexual one. While we might have a low view of Lot's morality and fatherhood, Peter refers to him as "righteous" in 2 Peter 2:7-8.

#### TRANSLATION - 19:10-22:

**10** So the men reached out their hand and brought Lot to them, to the house, and the door they shut. **11** Then the men who [were] at the opening of the house, they struck with blindness from the little until the big so they tired to find the opening. **12** Then the men said to Lot, "Whoever [is] with you here, a son-in-law and your sons and your daughters, and all who [are] with you in the city, bring from the place. **13** Because destroying we are this place because great its cry of help to the face of Jehovah and Jehovah sent us to destroy it."

**14** So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, takers of his daughters, and he said, "Get up! Go out from this place because Jehovah is destroying the city!" But it was as laughing in the eyes of the sons-in-law. **15** And in the morning, he went down and the angels urged on Lot, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters, the ones being found, lest you are swept away in the wickedness of the city."

**16** But he lingered and the men seized him by the hand and by the hand of his wife and by the hand of his two daughters by the compassion of Jehovah on them and they brought them out and put him outside the city. **17** And it was when they brought them outside that he said, "Escape by your soul! Do not gaze after you! And do not stand in all the valley of the mountain! Escape lest you perish!"

**18** So Lot said to them, "No, please, my lord. **19** Behold, please, your servant has found grace in your eyes and your loving loyalty is great which you did to me to preserve my soul. Now my lord, I am not able to escape to the mountain lest the calamity overtake me and I will die. **20** Behold, please, that city [is] near to flee there and it is small. Let me escape, please, there. Is it not small? Let my soul live."

**21** And he said to him, "Behold, I am lifting up your face for this thing, I will not destroy the city which you have spoken. **22** Hurry! Escape from there because I am not able to do a thing until you come there." Thus the name of the city is called Zoar.

#### WORDS:

"Blindness" (verse 11) means "dazzling light" but carries the idea of blindness. It is only used here and in 2 Kings 6:18. "Tired" is used 19 times. "Destroy" (verse 14) was found in the destruction of the world in the time of Noah (6:11-13, 17; 9:11, 15). "Sweep away" (verse 15) was found in the prediction of Sodom's destruction in 18:23-24. "Wickedness" was first used in 4:13; see comments there.

"Lingered" (verse 16; 9 times) is found with theological significance in Psalm 119:60 and Habakkuk 2:3. "By the compassion" (41 times) is all one word and means to have "compassion" or "mercy" for someone. "Loving loyalty" (verse 19; 249 times) means "loyalty, faithfulness, steadfast love, or lovingkindness." It has deep theological significance, especially as it applies to God's loyalty to His covenant people. This is the first time the word is used in Scripture. "Overtake" (55 times) was first used in 2:24; it means to "cling, cleave to, or pursue closely." "Calamity" is used 312 times, but it often carries the idea of moral or spiritual evil (as in 2:9, 17; 3:5, 22; 6:5). Here, it suggests more the idea of calamity or catastrophe than moral evil, since it is referring to God's destruction, which is not moral evil. "Destroy" (verse 21; 95 times) means to "turn, overturn, or overthrow."

## COMMENTS:

The men (angels) reached outside to grab Lot and jerk him inside the safety of the house, closing the door. We expect the action of closing the door was the same type of action as God closing the door of the ark in Genesis 7:16. In other words, the Sodomites would *not* be opening that door! In fact, the angels struck the Sodomites with blindness so that they tired themselves looking for the door. This, in itself, must have been a miraculous act of God.

The angels then compel Lot to gather his family, his sons-in-law, his sons, and his daughters. We have no further reference to Lot's sons so there does not appear to be any. The text is actually ambiguous as to how many daughters Lot had and whether they were married or not. In 19:8, he says he has two daughters who were virgins. In 19:12, there is mention of "sons-in-law." Were there other daughters who were married? It depends on how we translate 19:14, the "sons-in-law" who were "taking his daughters." Is that past tense, so that Lot did have married daughters? Or is it present tense, in the sense of an engagement, and the daughters were not yet married? Ultimately, we do not know. However, since only two daughters are mentioned in 19:8 and only two daughters are mentioned in 19:15, 30ff, we believe there were only two daughters who were still engaged when they fled Sodom. The angels say that they are going to destroy the place; notice the verb is a present participle: "we are destroying." That illustrates the finality of God's decision to destroy the cities of the plains.

When Lot tried to warn his sons-in-law, they simply found Lot's warning laughable. Lot delayed leaving until the next morning when the angels persisted that Lot needed to leave and take his wife and daughters with him, if the sons-in-law would not listen. But the angels could not destroy the cities if Lot and his family were still there, apparently a fulfillment of God's promise not to destroy the cities if any righteous could be found. If Lot were not to obey, he would not be among the "righteous" and would be swept away with the wicked.

Lot and his family still lingered until the angels literally grabbed each one by the hand to practically drag them out of the city, so it could be destroyed. Outside the city, the angels commanded Lot and his family to "escape!" (The word "escape" is used five times in verses 17-22). "Don't turn your gaze backward!" "Do not linger in the valley toward the mountains!" It was the compassion of Jehovah God that continued to compel Lot to hurry and obey, despite his reticence to leave his home.

Lot recognized he was the recipient of God's grace and His loving loyalty so, as Abraham had done to some degree in the previous chapter, Lot tries to negotiate with Jehovah God. Lot wanted to escape to the village of Zoar since it was a small, insignificant city.

So, the angel who was the spokesman allowed Lot to flee to Zoar. He just encouraged him to do so quickly so they could get done with the destruction they were sent to do.

## APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - Lot's home is about to be destroyed; why is he arguing over the escape route? Lot was wealthy (13:5-6, 7-8). He would have to leave all that behind.

## TRANSLATION - 19:23-29:

**23** The sun went out over the land but Lot came to Zoar. **24** Then Jehovah made it rain on Sodom and on Gomorrah sulphur with fire from Jehovah from heaven. **25** So He destroyed these cities and all the valley and all the inhabitants of the cities and the vegetation of the land.

**26** Then his wife looked behind her and she became a pillar of salt.

**27** So Abraham arose early in the morning to the place where he was standing there before Jehovah. **28** And he looked down on the face of Sodom and Gomorrah and on all the face of the earth, the plain and he saw and behold there went up the smoke of the land as the smoke of a furnace.

**29** Then it happened when God destroyed the cities of the plain that God remembered Abraham and sent Lot from the midst of the overthrow, when He destroyed the cities which Lot dwelt in them.

### WORDS:

“Sulphur” (verse 24; 7 times) is also often translated “brimstone.” The words “sulphur” and “fire” could be an example of hendiadys, where two words are used for one idea: “burning sulphur.” “Looked” (verse 26; 70 times) can be translated “to gaze, or behold.” “Pillar” (12 times) can refer to a literal post or a person who keeps a post or position, such as a governor or military garrison. “Salt” is used 23 times. “Looked down” (verse 28) means to “look down on or look down from above.” “Smoke” is found also in Psalm 119:83. “Furnace” is found also in Exodus 9:8, 10; 19:18 and can mean a forge or kiln.

### ARCHAEOLOGY:

Zoar (verse 23) means “little” or “insignificant” which is a play on the word “small” (verse 20) and the word “younger” (verse 31). It is believed to have been in the southern Dead Sea area.

### COMMENTS:

As the sun was rising that morning, Lot was on his way to Zoar, with his wife and two daughters. On the way, Jehovah God started raining burning brimstone, smelling of sulphur, on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. We can imagine the noise caused by the destruction, the cries for help, pain and agony, as well as the smell of the brimstone. All of which, perhaps, compelled Lot’s wife to look back at the home she had loved and where she had raised her daughters. But in looking back, she disobeyed a direct command of God through His angels, and God caused her, miraculously, to turn into a pillar of salt. Some have suggested the destruction was caused by an earthquake and/or lightning from God. Perhaps she was covered in debris which made her “turn” into salt. However, the text reads clearly and there is no evidence that God used natural causes to bring about the destruction or Lot’s wife’s change.

Abraham appears in the picture again, in verse 27, as he arose to look out over the destruction of the cities of the plains in the south of the Dead Sea area. We can only wonder at the pain Abraham felt in his heart that not enough righteous people could be found in Sodom to spare the city. We guess that Abraham wondered in his heart about his nephew and his family. The text does not tell us if he ever knows Lot’s fate. Thus, Moses tells us that God “remembered Abraham” and sent Lot out of the midst of the destruction. In other words, God saved Lot, apparently, for the sake of His promise and relationship with Abraham.

### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - When God commands, He expects obedience. Since Lot was not “walking” with God (apparently) as Abraham had been, his wife did not take God’s command seriously. She paid a heavy price, but Lot would pay for the rest of his life for not taking obedience seriously.

*Moses’ Contemporaries* - Lot is not mentioned again after 19:36. Moses will refer to the “sons of Lot” in Deuteronomy 2:9, 19. Moses will refer to the destruction of the cities of the plain in Deuteronomy 29:23.

*Later Hebrew writers* - The psalmist will refer to Lot in Psalm 83:8.

*NT writers* - The destruction of Sodom and the punishment of Lot’s wife will be a subject of Jesus’ lesson in Luke 17:28-32. The only other time Lot will be mentioned in the NT will be 2 Peter 2:7-8.

### TRANSLATION - 19:30-38:

**30** Lot went up from Zoar and dwelt in the mountain and his two daughters with him that he feared to dwell in Zoar and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. **31** Then the firstborn said to the younger, “Our father [is] old and a man there is not in the land to come to

us in the manner of all the land. **32** Come! Let us make our father drink wine and let us sleep with him and let us preserve from our father seed.”

**33** So they made their father drink wine that night and she came, the firstborn, and slept with her father and he did not know when she laid with him and when she arose. **34** Then it was the next day and the older said to the younger, “Behold, I laid down yesterday with our father. Let us make him drink wine again tonight. You, come, lie with him, and let us preserve from our father seed.” **35** So she made him drink also that night, her father the wine, and the youngest arose and lay with him and he did not know when she lay down and when she arose.

**36** Then they became pregnant, the two daughters of Lot from their father. **37** Now the oldest gave birth to a son and called his name “Moab.” He [is] the father of the Moabites to this day. **38** Then the younger also, she gave birth to a son and she called his name “Ben-Ammi”. He [is] the father of the Ben-ammites to this day.

#### WORDS:

“Cave” (verse 30) is found 41 times; this is the first. Lot surely was not the first human to live in a cave, but this illustrates that “cavemen” do not have to be prehistoric men as we commonly imagine under the influence of evolution. Caves were good places to live in certain climates. “Firstborn” (verse 31; 12 times) is related to the word we found in 4:4; it is related to the word for “birthright.” “Younger” (23 times) means “little, small, or young.” “Became pregnant” (verse 36; 43 times) has been seen a few times, since 4:1. “Moab” means “from father.” “Ben-Ammi” means, literally, “Son of my people.”

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

Moabites are mentioned sixteen times with “Moab” being mentioned 187x. The Moabites, through Balaam, would seduce Israel through sexual immorality into idolatry at Baal Peor in Numbers 25. The Ammonites are mentioned 22x while Ammon is mentioned 106x. The Moabites and the Ammonites settled to the east of the Jordan River, Moab toward the south; Ammon toward the north.

#### COMMENTS:

Lot decided it was too dangerous for him to dwell in Zoar so he and his daughters decided to live in a cave, probably until they could get their lives moving in the right direction after such a tragic crisis. The two daughters feared that there were no men around for them to marry, so they conspired to commit incest with their father. Surely their fear was unfounded. Zoar had not been destroyed and surely had males in it. Otherwise, a quick trip around the area would inform them that the destruction was only local. They were concerned about the “manner of all the land” (19:31) as opposed to the “way of Jehovah” (18:19) in which Abraham walked.

We recall that there were inter-familial relationships during those early days, as Cain married a sister, aunt, or niece, and Abraham married his half-sister. However, this would be, by far, the closest relationship from a sexual standpoint. So, the women get their father drunk and they take turns sleeping with him.

The oldest gives birth to a boy whom she names “Moab.” He becomes the forefather of the Moabites. The youngest gives birth to a boy, as well, and she names him “Benammi,” who becomes the forefather of the Ammonites. Both these nations will prove to be something of a problem for the Israelites, but we again see that the nations around Israel are related to Israel. They are all one blood, in its ultimate sense.

#### APPLICATION:

*Contemporaries in the text* - What can be said of Lot in all this? He did not obey the angels and go to the mountains at the first; then he did. He allowed himself to get drunk and his daughters, who were extremely short-sighted, to engage in incest with him.

*Moses' Contemporaries* - Fire will be a punishment God sends from heaven on other occasions (Num. 16:35). The law of Moses does not explicitly condemn father-daughter relationships in its moral code, but the general condemnation would probably include it (Lev. 18:6). It does condemn relationships that were further removed than this one; we presume it was sinful in God's eyes as well (cf. Lev. 20:14). Neither the Ammonite nor Moabite could enter the tabernacle until the tenth generation (Deut. 23:3). But God did not allow Israel to take the land given to the Moabites (Deut. 2:9) or the Ammonites (Deut. 2:19).

*Later Hebrew writers* - There will be hostility between Israel and their "cousins," the Moabites and Ammonites throughout her history (Judges 3:12-30; 10:6-11:33; 1 Sam. 11:1-11; 2 Sam. 10:1-14; 2 Kings 3:4-27; Zeph. 2:8-11). Through a poor marriage choice, Solomon will be influenced to make an image of the Ammonites' god, Molech, and then worship it (1 Kings 11:5-8; see also 2 Kings 16:1-4; 17:6-18; 21:1-16; 23:10-13; 24:1-4). Perhaps this wife was Naamah, because she was the mother of his son, Rehoboam (1 Kings 14:21, 31). "Molech" was the god of the Ammonites, mentioned eight times (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; 1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:10; Jer. 32:35). "Chemosh" was the god of the Moabites, mentioned eight times as well (Num. 21:29; Judges 11:24; 1 Kings 11:7, 33; 2 Kings 23:13; Jer. 48:7, 13, 46).

Ruth is a Moabitess who, through faith, finds herself in the lineage of Jesus Christ (Ruth 1:1-4; 4:22; Matt. 1:5). Moab and Ammon were still enemies of Israel after the exile (Neh. 13:23).

*NT writers* - The NT does not limit sexual relationships among families as explicitly as the OT does, except to limit it to heterosexual relationships. Yet in 1 Corinthians 5:1, the church in Corinth had a man who was having a relationship with his mother (step-mother?) which Paul condemns and says that Gentiles (pagans) did not even practice that behavior!