

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 19

AS WE FINISHED GENESIS 18 WE READ OF ABRAHAM'S EXCHANGE WITH THE LORD REGARDING SAVING THE CITIES OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH ON ACCOUNT OF THE RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE, THOUGH PERHAPS FEW, THAT LIVED IN THE CITY. THE LORD HAD SENT TWO ANGELS TOWARDS SODOM TO INQUIRE REGARDING THE DEPTHS OF EVIL THAT RESIDED THERE. SADLY, THEY WILL FIND OUT FIRST HAND ABOUT THE EVIL OF THE CITY, BUT ALSO THAT EVEN ABRAHAM'S FINAL NUMBER OF 10 RIGHTEOUS TO SPARE THE CITY WILL NOT BE MET. AND SO WE MOVE TO GENESIS 19, ONE OF THE MOST GRAPHIC AND CONSEQUENTIAL CHAPTERS IN SCRIPTURE.

GENESIS 19:1-3 - LOT LIVES IN SODOM, WELCOME THE ANGELS

WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM LOT SINCE GENESIS 14 WHEN WE READ THAT HE HAD MOVED INTO THE REGION OF SODOM, BUT NOW HE APPEARS AGAIN, ALMOST AS A SURPRISE TO THE READER. PERHAPS THIS IS WHY ABRAHAM WANTED TO INTERCEDE FOR THE CITY - HE KNOW HIS NEPHEW WAS THERE.

LOT WELCOMES TO ANGELS AND OFFERS TO HOUSE AND FEED THEM FOR THE NIGHT. THE ANGELS PLANNED TO SLEEP "IN THE SQUARE" AND UPON HEARING THIS, LOT "URGED THEM STRONGLY" TO STAY WITH HIM. AS WE READ ON, WE WILL SOON FIND OUT WHY.

GENESIS 19:4-11 - THE WICKED MEN OF SODOM

JUST AS THE FAMILY HEADS TOWARDS BED, THE MEN OF SODOM SURROUND LOT'S HOUSE AND BEG FOR LOT TO GIVE THE TWO "MEN" OVER TO THEM SO THEY MAY HAVE (SEXUAL) "RELATIONS" WITH THEM.

LOT APPEALS TO THE PEOPLE TO LEAVE, BUT IT SEEMS AS IF LOT HAS BEEN COMPROMISED - HE PLEADS WITH THE PEOPLE OF SODOM AS HIS "BROTHERS" AND THEN MAKES A SHOCKING AND UNTHINKABLE COUNTER OFFER OF HIS OWN VIRGIN DAUGHTERS.

AS LOT TRIES TO REASON WITH THE UNREASONABLE AND PERVERTED MOB, THE PEOPLE OF SODOM TURN ON LOT AND THREATEN TO HARM LOT. IF NOT FOR THE ANGEL'S INTERVENTION - BOTH GRABBING LOT TO BRING HIM BACK ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR AND THEN STRIKING THE MEN OF THE CROWD WITH BLINDNESS - LOT WOULD HAVE BEEN KILLED.

GENESIS 19:12-14 - A DECISION IS MADE

THE ANGELS HAVE SEEN ENOUGH TO MAKE THEIR DETERMINATION ON THE FATE OF THE CITY. IT IS GOING TO BE DESTROYED. IN GOD'S GRACE, THE ANGELS INFORM LOT ABOUT THIS AND GIVE HIM A CHANCE TO WARN AND GATHER HIS FAMILY SO THEY MAY FLEE THE CITY BEFORE THE JUDGMENT COMES. BUT WHEN LOT SHARES THE NEWS WITH HIS FAMILY, THEY THINK HE'S JOKING.

GENESIS 19:15-22

IT WAS TIME FOR LOT AND HIS FAMILY TO LEAVE. YET LOT "HESITATED" (V. 16) AND HE AND HIS FAMILY NEEDED TO LITERALLY BE PULLED OUT OF THE CITY BY THE ANGELS. THE ANGELS CLEAR THE CITY LIMITS AND CHARGE LOT TO RUN AWAY, AND ESCAPE FAR AWAY

FROM SODOM - OR ELSE THEY WOULD BE CAUGHT IN THE JUDGEMENT. HOW DOES LOT RESPOND? HE OFFERS UP ANOTHER PLAN... "OH NO, MY LORDS" HE SAYS!

LOT ASKS IF HE CAN SETTLE IN THE CITY OF ZOAR, A SMALL CITY THAT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN PART OF GOD'S ORIGINAL JUDGMENT, BUT BECAUSE OF HIS MERCY, AND ONLY BECAUSE OF HIS MERCY, HE ALLOWS LOT TO REST THERE. IT'S KIND OF ABSURD TO THINK ABOUT LOT'S REQUEST IN THE BIGGER CONTEXT OF THIS STORY. LOT AND HIS FAMILY ARE GOING TO BE DESTROYED, IF NOT FOR GOD'S MERCY. YET EVEN WHEN GOD DIRECTS LOT, LOT HAS STIPULATIONS AND HESITANCY IN OBEYING GOD. *"YES GOD, YOU CAN SAVE ME, I GUESS THAT'S OKAY... BUT I'D LIKE YOU TO SAVE ME LIKE THIS..."*

WOW. THANKFULLY WE WOULD NEVER HAVE COMMENTS OR CRITIQUES ABOUT THE THINGS GOD ASKS OF US IN HIS PLAN TO BRING US TO SALVATION???

THE ANGELS ALLOW LOT TO SETTLE IN ZOAR BUT GIVE HIM AND HIS FAMILY VERY SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS: "ESCAPE FOR YOUR LIFE, DON'T LOOK BEHIND YOU..." THIS IS A SERIOUS MOMENT.

GENESIS 19:23-26 - JUDGMENT COMES

SODOM AND GOMORRAH ARE DESTROYED BY BRIMSTONE AND FIRE FALLING FROM THE SKY - A WAY THAT WOULD BE UNMISTAKABLE THAT IT COMES FROM GOD. THE CITIES OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH AND THE SURROUNDING AREA ARE COMPLETELY ANNIHILATED. THE LAND AROUND THE CITIES IS MADE DESOLATE AS WELL. THIS IS A PICTURE OF THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF THE LORD UPON THE UNREPENTANT SINNER.

AND AS THE CITIES ARE DESTROYED, LOT'S WIFE "LOOKS BACK" AND IS INSTANTLY TURNED INTO A "PILLAR OF SALT." LOT HESITATED, HIS FUTURE SONS IN LAW REFUSE TO LEAVE, AND NOW LOT'S WIFE APPEARS TO LONG TO RETURN TO HER LIFE IN SODOM, AT THE VERY LEAST SHE DOESN'T FEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD IN THIS CRITICAL MOMENT (REMEMBER IN GENESIS 19:17 GOD SAID THROUGH THE ANGELS, "DON'T LOOK BEHIND YOU").

THIS MOMENT COMES AND GOES IN THE TEXT VERY QUICKLY, BUT CAN NOT BE PASSED BY - IT IS VERY SIGNIFICANT. JESUS WILL REFERENCE THIS MOMENT IN LUKE 17 WHEN HE PREPARES HIS DISCIPLES FOR THE TRIALS TO COME BEFORE HIS RETURN (AND THE FINAL DAY OF THE LORD).

LUKE 17:32-33 - "REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE. 33 "WHOEVER SEEKS TO KEEP HIS LIFE WILL LOSE IT, AND WHOEVER LOSES HIS LIFE WILL PRESERVE IT.

LOT'S WIFE LOOKED BACK LITERALLY BUT IN HER HEART SHE WAS LOOKING BACK TO THE LIFE SHE HAD IN SODOM. MAYBE SHE WAS SAD ABOUT THE FRIENDS SHE LEFT BEHIND. MAYBE SHE WAS SAD ABOUT HER HOME. MAYBE SHE WAS THINKING ABOUT HER FAVORITE PLACES IN THE CITY TO VISIT. MAYBE SHE WAS REFLECTING ON THE THINGS SHE COULD NO LONGER DO NOW THAT THE CITY AND IT'S LIFE WAS GONE.

BUT WHATEVER HER HEART'S LONGING - SHE WAS LOOKING BACK WHEN THE LORD SPECIFICALLY COMMANDED HER NOT TO. DO NOT FEEL BAD FOR LOT'S WIFE, REMEMBER THE LESSON OF LOT'S WIFE. SHE KNEW WHAT SHE SHOULD AND SHOULDN'T DO AND MADE HER CHOICE. SHE OVERLOOKED THE EVIL AND WICKEDNESS OF SODOM, AND PERHAPS HER OWN PARTICIPATION IN THAT LIFE THERE, TO LOOK BACK WITH SORROW FOR THAT, AND NOT FOR THE EVIL.

INSTEAD OF BEING GRATEFUL FOR GOD'S MERCY AND FEARING HIS POWER TO BRING JUDGMENT, SHE WAS NOSTALGIC FOR DAYS GONE BY. AND SO, WITH HER HEART AND THOUGHTS IN SODOM, SHE TOO FACES THE JUDGMENT AND BECOMES AN ETERNAL EXAMPLE OF WHAT NOT TO DO.

GENESIS 19:27-29 - ABRAHAM WATCHES FROM ABOVE

THIS IS AN INTERESTING INTERJECTION TO THE TEXT. THE NARRATOR BRINGS US BACK TO ABRAHAM WHO LOOKS INTO THE VALLEY AND SEES SODOM AND GOMORRAH GONE. CERTAINLY HE REALIZED THAT THERE WERE NOT 10 RIGHTEOUS FOUND IN THE CITY AFTERALL. LOT AND HIS FAMILY ARE SPARED BECAUSE GOD LOVED ABRAHAM AND THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM WAS WIDE ENOUGH TOUCH LOT AND HIS FAMILY - WHO CLEARLY WERE NOT SPARED FOR THEIR OWN PIETY.

GENESIS 19:30-38 - YOU CAN TAKE A FAMILY OUT OF SODOM, BUT NOT THE SODOM OUT OF A FAMILY

LOT HAS BEEN SPARED - HE IS MOVES FROM ZOAR TO THE SAFETY OF THE MOUNTAINS. BUT WHEN HE ARRIVES, HIS TWO DAUGHTERS (REMEMBER THE GIRLS LOT OFFERED TO THE MEN OF SODOM?) MAKE A PLAN TO SLEEP WITH THEIR FATHER AND BECOME IMPREGNATED THROUGH HIM. (YES, THIS IS WHAT WE ARE ACTUALLY READING IN GENESIS 19). THEY GET HIM DRUNK AND FOR TWO SUCCESSIVE NIGHTS GET PREGNANT WITH THEIR FATHER'S CHILDREN.

THE CHILDREN BORN OF THIS DESPICABLE EVENT ARE MOAB AND BEN-AMMI, THE FATHERS OF THE MOABITES AND AMMONITES - TWO OF THE NATIONS WHO WILL CAUSE MUCH TROUBLE FOR THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM IN THE GENERATIONS TO COME.

THERE ARE A FEW MAIN THINGS WE LEARN FROM GENESIS 19

FIRST, WE ARE REMINDED THAT THE LORD IS THE GOD OF JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT. WE TYPICALLY FOCUS ON GOD'S GRACE AND MERCY IN OUR LIVES, AND WE RIGHTFULLY SHOULD - BUT WE CAN'T OVERLOOK HIS POWER AND JUSTICE. AS ABRAHAM SAID "WILL NOT THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH DO RIGHT?" WE MUST HAVE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARDS HIM AND SERVE HIM WITH REVERENCE AND FEAR. HE'S OUR HEAVENLY FATHER AND A CONSUMING FIRE.

SECONDLY, THE REST OF SCRIPTURE HOLDS UP THIS STORY OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH AS THE EXAMPLE OF THE ETERNAL JUDGMENT IN THE END.

2 PETER 2:6 (NLT) - LATER, GOD CONDEMNED THE CITIES OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH AND TURNED THEM INTO HEAPS OF ASHES. HE MADE THEM AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO UNGODLY PEOPLE.

THE PEOPLE OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH WERE COMPLETELY DESTROYED AND EVEN TODAY, WHILE THERE ARE MANY ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE REGION OF ISRAEL AND THE MIDDLE EAST, NO ONE KNOWS WHERE SODOM AND GOMORRAH WERE. THERE IS NO REMNANT OF THE CITY'S WALLS, ARCHITECTURE OR ARTIFACTS. THE REASON WHY IS BECAUSE THE CITIES AND THEIR INHABITANTS WERE DESTROYED WITH THE "ETERNAL FIRE" OF THE LORD. THIS ISN'T TO SAY THAT THE BURNING OF THE FIRE IS ETERNAL, BUT THAT THE EFFECTS OF THE FIRE IS.

AND LASTLY, THERE IS A LESSON FOR US TODAY ABOUT NOT WAITING TO OBEY THE LORD. GENESIS 19:16 SAYS THAT AFTER HEARING THE WORD OF THE LORD ABOUT THE COMING JUDGMENT, LOT "HESITATED" ("LINGERED", ESV, KJV). FOR SURE, WE ALL HAVE PLENTY OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THINGS THAT THE LORD ASKS US TO DO. WE PRAY FOR WISDOM TO UNDERSTAND DIFFERENT THINGS AND SITUATIONS IN LIFE. BUT THEN WE HAVE SOME INSTANCES WHERE WE KNOW EXACTLY WHAT GOD WANTS US TO DO AND WE WAIT. WE HESITATE. WE LINGER.

LOT'S HESITATION WAS DUE IN PART TO HIS LACK OF FAITH IN THE REALITY OF THE COMING JUDGMENT. EVEN WHEN THE ANGELS CHARGE HIM TO FLEE TO THE MOUNTAINS, LOT OFFERS A SECOND OPTION. HE HAD NEVER SEEN FIRE FALLING FROM THE SKY - SO HOW CAN HE BE SURE IT IS COMING? YET LOT'S "FAITH" WASN'T TO BE IN WHETHER OR NOT HE HAD SEEN FIRE AND BRIMSTONE BEFORE - HIS "FAITH" WAS SUPPOSED TO BE IN THE WORD OF THE LORD - WHICH WAS "JUDGEMENT IS COMING, HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TO ESCAPE IT."

AND YET LOT DOESN'T BELIEVE THE LORD - EVEN AFTER HIS LIFE IS SPARED FROM ASSAULT BY THE ANGELS OUTSIDE OF HIS OWN FRONT DOOR AND AGAIN AS THE ANGELS TAKE HIM OUT OF THE CITY ITSELF THE NEXT MORNING.

HIS NEED TO OBEY WITHOUT HESITATION WAS NOT DEPENDANT ON HIM HAVING IT ALL FIGURED OUT AND SEEING EVERY STEP ALONG THE WAY - HIS NEED WAS BECAUSE GOD KNEW WHAT WAS RIGHT AND BEST FOR LOT AND LOT NEEDED TO TRUST THAT IF THE LORD WAS ASKING HIM TO DO SOMETHING, GOD WOULD BE WITH HIM, AND IN THE END WORK THINGS TO BE GOOD FOR LOT.

AND SO THOUGH HE WASN'T A MAIN FOCUS OF THIS CHAPTER, WE RETURN TO ABRAHAM, THE GREAT EXAMPLE OF FAITH. THOUGHT FLAWED, ABRAHAM'S EXAMPLE WAS ONE OF OBEDIENCE AND ACTION - NOT ONE OF HESITATION OR LINGERING. ABRAHAM OBEYED GOD BECAUSE HE TRUSTED GOD'S WORD, IN SPITE OF HIS LACK OF EVIDENCE.

SOMETIMES WE CAN'T WAIT TO OBEY GOD UNTIL WE HAVE EVERYTHING SORTED OUT OR HAVE EVERY OPTION CALCULATED. SOMETIMES WE JUST NEED TO DO WHAT GOD SAYS (ESPECIALLY AS RECORDED IN THE BIBLE) BASED ON OUR TRUST FOR GOD. IN SOME CASES, IF WE WAIT TO OBEY GOD, THERE WILL BE CONSEQUENCES THAT WE WON'T BE ABLE TO FIX. REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE. FEAR THE LORD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS AND DON'T HESITATE. THE DAY OF THE LORD IS AT HAND.