

GENESIS

A THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY

THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB

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THE RESCUE OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN (*GENESIS 19*)

One of the most maligned and misunderstood characters of the Bible is Lot, Abraham's nephew. And the main reason for this is that most people, when reading about all the troubles he had, naturally attribute those problems to his "sins." We all know that God punishes the wicked, right? Even when his own people sin against him, God will discipline them to teach them to change their ways. And for as disastrous an end as Lot came to, one would surmise that he must have had spiritual issues. Modern preachers have a whole laundry list of crimes that Lot committed against God.

Wrong. Here is one of those places in the Bible that reveal a bad hermeneutic sending students in a completely wrong direction. If we aren't careful to stick *exactly* to what the Apostles tell us, we're going to get the wrong interpretation of Old Testament stories – and here in Lot's case, it's especially necessary to follow their lead, because the details are so easy to misinterpret. Let's look again at what Peter says about Lot: "If he rescued *righteous* Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (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)." (2 Peter 2:7-8) Peter calls Lot "righteous" three times in this single passage – something that is not done with anybody else in Scripture. Evidently he's trying to get us to see something important. When Peter reads the story in Genesis, this is what *he* sees. If we see something different, then we are setting ourselves against the Apostle's authority and reading our own assumptions into the story.

So we have to go back to the story of Lot and read it again more carefully, step by step, so that we can learn the right lesson that Peter wants us to get from it – particularly those problems that moderns have with Lot's life. We have to stop making wrong assumptions about events that look confusing, and rigorously apply Peter's hermeneutic. What we're going to find is that, in the end, we will hope that the LORD would take care of us as well as he did Lot!

The search of the two angels – We have to keep in mind what these two angels are here for. They are looking for righteous people: if they find, according to the discussion with Abraham, at least ten righteous people in Sodom then they won't destroy the city. They aren't going to be impressed with low-level definitions of righteousness, either. This is God's special work, this business of judgment, and he is going to find those who are really righteous. "The LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

Angels also have another purpose. The name "angel" means "messenger", and in this case they have two messages to deliver from the LORD: one to Lot, to flee from the wrath to come, and one to Sodom, a message of death.

Lot sitting in the gateway – It's true that the elders of a city sat in the gate in those days, and there is where the current events were discussed and problems solved. Just by him being there, we get the idea that Lot was important enough to the people of the city to be wanted in on the discussions.

It doesn't tell us anything about his intentions, however.

Don't we have Christians in our government? Do they necessarily agree with the wickedness that goes on there, even the wicked decisions that are made? Just by being involved in government functions doesn't mean that they agree with everything that happens! We can't accuse Lot, either, of being so wrapped up in the affairs of Sodom that he couldn't discern their wickedness, that he actually approved of their behavior. Just the bare fact of his being in on the governing body doesn't tell us a thing about his thoughts.

We have to surmise his intentions from what we know about him, not from conclusions that we may jump to when we see him sitting there at the gate. If he was a *righteous ... righteous ... righteous* man, and if he was under the protection of the Covenant of God (which we've seen proof of already), what can we safely assume about his involvement with the Sodomites? Only this: he was probably the only good influence on the city council. If he was truly distressed at the wickedness of the city, would you be impressed to find him trying to counter-act that wickedness? In fact, wouldn't you expect that from a righteous man? Although the story doesn't tell us what he was doing there, knowing his character would lead us to believe that he was doing all he could to influence events for the better. In fact, we do see him doing just that, later in the story – Genesis 19:7-8. He never was considered one of them (as we see in their remark in Genesis 19:9), so his attending their meetings must have reflected his hope to change *them* rather than them appreciating him.

Welcoming the angels – We too easily miss the significance of this part of the story. In those days it was an unwritten social rule that you should welcome strangers into your home. There were no hotels or motels, and travel was long, tedious, difficult and expensive. It was considered nothing short of rudeness to refuse a passing traveler food and rest; later the Law of Moses would make provision for taking care of passers-by. (Deuteronomy 10:18, Matthew 25:35) In other words, this was a test of character: how do people treat others in their need?

If nobody offered a stranger a place to stay for the night, he would have to stay in the town square all night, perhaps cold and hungry, and he would inevitably pass on a bad report to other cities and travelers about this inhospitable place he met with on their travels. At the very least that meant that the city's business would drop off as a result; at the most, as in this case with Sodom, it would mean their lives.

Notice who offered the strangers a meal and bed. Lot immediately responded to their needs; he was the only one to do so. According to the Law of God, here was a righteous man; his actions proved the condition of his heart.

The meal he prepared – The Hebrew word is “feast” – he really went all out to entertain his guests. When you do this for someone, you are showing them how special they are to you. Did he know that they were angels sent by God? Probably not, since they didn't reveal themselves to him until later in the story. But Lot is doing something that few people are willing to do. He is spending his wealth and time on men he doesn't even know. How many people do you know who would spend their time and money on even their relatives, let alone perfect

strangers! Yet this is a mark of a righteous man, that he extends his help willingly to those in need. (Matthew 25:34-40)

Besides, Lot may have discerned these men's righteousness – he probably did – and it was a breath of fresh air to entertain good men for a change. Being distressed at the Sodomites' constant wickedness more than likely made Lot all the more enthusiastic about spending the night in the company of men who understood the fear of the LORD; he no doubt looked forward to hours of holy and wholesome conversation with them.

Notice, however, that he did the very same thing that his uncle Abraham did just days before this: these very same angels showed up at Abraham's tent, and he too went all out to feed them and make them comfortable. Isn't it remarkable that the very law that defines a righteous man is done both by the father of the faithful and his nephew? Can we draw conclusions about how much like Abraham that Lot was?

There is one more fascinating tidbit about this meal. Notice what he served them: unleavened bread. The text makes a point of telling us this. This is not something that we would have expected to see, long before the story of Passover and unleavened bread; yet it's highly significant in the context of the entire Bible. It was very appropriate to serve these angels bread without yeast since it was the symbol of redeemed Israel and a life without sin (as Jesus explains in Matthew 16:12 and Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8). Somehow Lot was enabled to see the symbol of holiness, of not being saturated with sin like the Sodomites, of presenting to God an acceptable sacrifice of a holy and clean

life. This is the kind of thing the angels were looking for.

All the men of the city – Here is how verse 4 reads in the Hebrew original: “The men of the city ... the men of Sodom ... both young and old ... all of the people ... to the last man.” We get the idea that the writer wants us to know that *all* the men of the city came out and surrounded Lot's house.¹ There is a reason for this, of course: the angels came to see if there were any righteous men in the city, and here they are presenting themselves for inspection. It will be an easy matter to look over the crowd and pick out the righteous ones; all they had to do was count heads and see if they could find at least ten.

Notice too how the count went. All those outside the house (the entire city) were demanding the right to commit wickedness. And all those inside the house (Lot) were appalled at such wickedness. The angels didn't have to spend much time figuring out the situation.

Lot and the crowd – In Hebrew it says that he called them “my brothers,” which naturally distresses us because we hate to hear him call them this. But it may be nothing more than the proverb of “turning away wrath” with a gentle answer; he was appealing to them as fellow citizens, in a way that should remind them of his sitting with them at the gate and helping them to see God's ways and give up their wickedness. There's nothing wrong with being politic in a volatile situation.

¹ As we've already noted, the average population for a “city” like Sodom in those days would probably have been around 2000, which means “all the men” would have amounted to several hundred.

What is interesting, however, is the fact that he closed the door behind him when he went out to address the crowd. This is just a little icing on the cake that showed Lot's heart. He was too embarrassed over the open immorality of the Sodomites to let his guests see or hear what was going on; he took the sordid job upon himself and tried to insulate his guests from the wickedness. He, of course, thought that they couldn't hear; but they, being angels, knew what he was going through on their behalf outside the door. It's a good thing they could hear through walls!

Offering his two daughters – Up until this part of the story Lot has done absolutely nothing that can even be construed into something wrong. Now, however, we run into a hitch. Why in the world did he offer his two daughters to the crowd, to “do to them as you please” (Genesis 19:8)?

Let's analyze the situation, keeping in mind Lot's performance up until this point. **First**, this was an extremely dangerous and touchy situation. The men of Sodom were about to do something, there was no mistaking that. Lot had seen enough of their behavior in the past that he was alarmed at what was about to happen. At a time of crisis like this, anything could happen, people lose their heads, and it is extremely difficult to do the right thing – there isn't much time to think. There weren't any police to call for help, either.

Second, the rules of social behavior dictated that Lot protect these strangers with his life. Being a righteous man, he would have spent the rest of his days in infamy if he would have let the Sodomites molest the guests in his house. (Genesis 19:8) We underestimate the strength of this unspoken principle in

their society; we don't really have anything that corresponds to it in ours, being individualistic as we are and having ready recourse to police and courts and insurance claims. And perhaps we would have done differently, stepping aside and allowing the crowd to do what they wanted with people we don't really know and care little for, but Lot just couldn't do that to these holy men. By law Lot was, literally, their only protection as their host.

Third, he at least offered a better solution than what they were demanding! It would have been bad enough for them to have his daughters; it was unthinkable, however, if they would have committed homosexuality. These Sodomites were not only wicked, they were *unnaturally* wicked – as Paul describes in Romans 1. Such things shouldn't even be mentioned, let alone done. (Ephesians 5:12) Sex is something between man and woman, not between man and man. This, I believe, is what Lot's point was here. Love for family took second place to love for God's Law. (Matthew 10:37) I'm afraid that we don't have many people of that spiritual caliber today even among dedicated Christians. Lot was willing to give up his most precious possessions for the sake of God's righteousness.

Given the circumstances, then, we can say this at least: it was a crisis, and it's difficult to be cool, calm and collected in such a situation. And the Sodomites were obviously going to do something. If Lot couldn't protect his family, he at least could make a statement about God's Law, which is a higher standard in life and must not be violated at all costs, even at the cost of his family. (Deuteronomy 13:6-11)

When the angels saw that he was ready to give up his family for their sake, they immediately pulled him inside and revealed their plans to him. This incident makes me think that they felt they had finally found their righteous man.

Finally, wasn't Abraham called upon to put *his* son to death? And if God would not have stopped him, he would have drawn his knife across Isaac's throat and we moderns would have been horrified. The parallel is too significant to ignore here: many things that the elder does, the nephew also does, although in different forms. They must have had the *same faith*, in other words.

The testing of Lot – The first third of this passage describes how the angels tested Lot. Remember from Genesis 18:16-33 that the LORD promised, because Abraham pressed him for the promise, that he wouldn't destroy the city of Sodom if there were ten righteous people in it. So before the angels can do the work of punishment, they have to find the righteous people.

Lot immediately showed his colors when they arrived in town. When he insisted that they stay at his house, despite their protests to the contrary and in spite of the fact that it might bring trouble to him, he scored one point – a righteous man does such things for travelers and strangers. The meal was the second point scored: it was an amazing act of faith for Lot to serve these angels (still unknown to him) unleavened bread. It was an appropriate thing to do, in light of the fact that they were looking for *holy* men, and leaven is the Bible's symbol of wickedness.

He scored another point when he put himself between the wicked men of Sodom and the strangers. Not only was it a courageous thing to do, but custom

demanding that a host do whatever necessary to protect his guests. Since the Sodomites wanted to commit sexual immorality with the angels, Lot showed his colors again in refusing them any opportunity for such wickedness. And if offering his daughters as an alternative to homosexuality was wicked, the angels would not have judged Lot to be a righteous man.

It was then that the angels were satisfied that they had a righteous man on their hands. But notice how they determined all this: they watched Lot's *actions*. They could see that he did righteous things, and they could also see that his faith motivated him to do these righteous things. His faith overruled his fear. It was obvious that Lot believed in God in such a way that it moved him to do those things which most pleased God, even though he may not have been aware of the fact he was being watched. This is a good example of what the Apostle talks about in James 2:14-26.

Lot's family problems – He certainly had these. As the story progresses we are amazed at how his whole family turned out so badly. Poor Lot struggled all along with family problems, as if he needed this extra burden when he had to deal with the Sodomites. There have been many who faulted Lot for how badly his family turned out – his sons-in-law refused to leave the city with him, his wife loved the city too much to leave it, his daughters committed incest with their father. So it's easy to blame him for not instructing them in the ways of the LORD.

But it may not be all his fault. We don't have the license to assume that Lot didn't train them in the ways of the LORD; does it *say* that about him? Since Peter calls him a righteous man, can we

fairly assume that in this area he was unrighteous? Because they turned out badly, is that reason to assume that he failed them? Aren't there other alternatives?

A person's enemies will be those of his own household. (Matthew 10:36)

It's entirely possible that he did try to instruct them. His sons-in-law would take their own counsel and not necessarily feel obligated to listen to him. They were, after all, Sodomites. His wife, as many people in history can testify to, decided for herself what she wanted in life, and she obviously didn't share her husband's view on things. It's unfortunate but true that many families are divided when it comes to the things of the LORD, through nobody's fault in particular. His daughters – well, we will look at their story in a minute; but we can safely assume that they learned their ways from their wicked neighbors. Children don't always turn out right, in spite of all efforts to the contrary. Our own lives are proof that our family often will not follow us in our faith. In condemning Lot, we therefore condemn ourselves as well.

It could very well be that Lot was the *only* righteous person in Sodom. This story isn't making a statement about how Lot might have conducted his family affairs; it's simply showing you who are the righteous and who are the wicked. You would miss its point if you make false assumptions that aren't clearly substantiated in the text. How these people came to be wicked, we can only guess, but we *know* that Lot is not one of them. Just remember that you and I are in the same boat – we are surrounded by a wicked world, wicked neighbors, and perhaps (though we dread the thought)

wicked family members. What has the LORD enabled us to do in *our* predicament?

Then why did he live in such a place where his family would be exposed to, and fall to the temptations of, the prevailing sins? For one thing, Lot probably didn't know how wicked this place was when he moved there. Second, the city did afford him a living, which is the same motivation for us staying where we are, although we also have to put up with things around us that aren't right. Third, he could very well have done his best, as we do, at shielding his family from his city's wickedness; don't we see this inclination of his heart in how he tried to shield his guests from the Sodomites?

Finally, this is a sobering example of what the LORD was doing in the entire story: separating out the righteous from the wicked. Not only did he separate Lot from the Sodomites, but he separated out the wicked in his family as well. The LORD doesn't play favorites; just because the head of the family is righteous doesn't mean that wicked family members will be protected from God's judgment. God will expose the hearts of everyone.

Why did he hesitate? – Some translations are misleading here: the original Hebrew (and the KJV) says that he “lingered”, not “hesitated.” “Hesitated” sounds as if he piddled around and took his time getting ready to go, as if he *didn't want* to go. But it's not that Lot didn't want to go with the angels or didn't believe their story. Of course he believed it – that's why he pleaded with his sons-in-law to leave.

But he was wondering what to do with his family; some of them weren't coming. And he didn't realize that the

disaster was waiting on *him*! The angels were under strict orders from God to hold back the disaster until Lot was safely out of range. So they were understandably urgent with him and kept trying to hurry him up. Lot, on the other hand, couldn't have known yet about the LORD's pact with Abraham, and he simply didn't know that he was the only reason Sodom still existed. This is an entirely reasonable ignorance. And if the facts were known, we might ourselves be amazed at the way God withholds his fury at our own world simply because we are still in the way. He will not strike the wicked if there is a chance that his precious children would be hurt in the process, even though it needs to be done.

Separating out the righteous – Again, we have to get a hold of the point of this story. The angels came to Sodom, they found the righteous and counted heads, and determined that the city was not worth saving. So before God raised his hand in wrath to destroy them, he removed his people out of the way, so that they would not share in the punishment of the wicked. If you lose sight of this then you lose the point of the whole story.

I don't know how people can miss this. It's not as if Lot was righteous only judicially, being otherwise unrighteous in his acts. The angels were sent to find the *truly righteous* in Sodom, and Lot was the only one they found. And they determined that by watching him *in action*. The facts are there. Peter saw the point too, and he doesn't stumble over the story's details that look confusing – as if God saved a man who didn't deserve it. The point is that God knows how to save *his righteous ones* from the punishment due to the wicked.

Lot's wife – Lot's wife is a tragic example of what often happens in spiritual crises. If she would have continued in her husband's care, and taken advantage of her husband's faith – even though her heart led her back to Sodom – she would have been spared. But the LORD's judgment found her out and she ended up sharing the fate of the rest of the wicked. She was not a righteous person, she didn't deserve to be treated as one, and she was destroyed along with the rest. The LORD knows not only how to save the righteous from disaster, but also how to bring disaster on those trying to flee from it and use someone else's righteousness as a cover. Their hearts are not in their religion, and God will expose their hypocrisy.

Where to go next? – There was some question as to where Lot should go next. The angels told him to flee to the hills because they had every intention of sweeping away every habitable place in the entire plain. "Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away!" (verse 17) But Lot didn't want to go to the mountains, probably because he was more used to living in an urban area, and he figured mountain life would be the end of him. (verse 19)

So he asked that the LORD let him stop at a town near there instead – a small one, which he figured wouldn't be any problem to the LORD. Notice that the LORD made a change of plans especially for Lot: "Behold, I grant you this favor also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken." (verse 21) It seems that, if Lot hadn't gone there, it would have been destroyed too. People should have realized what an important and valuable man Lot was to have around.

Because the LORD granted his request, we *must* assume that it was permissible for Lot to ask for it. The requests of a righteous man are answered. (James 5:16) Nobody can fault Lot for something that he asks of God, if God gives it to him. He doesn't give us things to hurt us but to help us. Again, the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. You can't argue with results. And the point here isn't that Lot argued with God; rather that destruction can't happen where the righteous live. The details and wording in the story point to this lesson.

Abraham saw the destruction – The next morning Abraham went out and looked down at where Sodom and Gomorrah used to be, and saw the belching smoke of destruction instead. He no doubt remembered the promise that the LORD had given him, and he must have assumed the obvious: there evidently weren't even ten righteous people in Sodom. He knew his God.

And the LORD knew that Abraham was watching. (verse 29) He had already tested Abraham's faith and would test it even more with other issues. He delivered righteous Lot from the disaster, just as he promised he would. But the lesson here was that God doesn't play around: rebellious sinners would do well to take the threats of God seriously, because one day he will pour out his wrath on them, and nobody will be able to help them.

But the point about the righteous still stuck in Abraham's mind. If he knew his God as well as we might expect, he knew that his nephew was safe somewhere – the righteous *are* delivered from the punishment poured out on the wicked. We aren't told if they met up again; but it's likely that Abraham's

faith in God was confirmed at some future date by hearing about Lot's miraculous escape from Sodom.

Leaving Zoar – We can make a guess as to why Lot left Zoar. Remember that the LORD granted Lot's request to go to Zoar instead of going to the mountains. He said then that "I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken." (verse 21) It seems that if Lot would not have gone there, the town of Zoar was doomed with Sodom and would also have been destroyed. While Lot was in Sodom, the LORD "cannot do anything" (verse 22); while Lot is in Zoar, that town was safe too.

But since the LORD seemed to change his mind about destroying Zoar for Lot's sake, we can suppose that the people who lived there actually deserved to be destroyed as much as the Sodomites. Probably Lot found this out after being there a short time; and after what he just saw in Sodom he probably felt that Zoar was next on the list. So he decided that perhaps the mountains weren't such a bad idea after all. Lot was also learning about his God.

Living in a cave – It seems strange to us that Lot and his daughters would live in a cave; it sounds as if they were destitute, had nothing left in life, and were only waiting for the end. But think about the situation: destitute people don't have plenty of food, nor do they have luxuries such as wine sitting around. Although he probably lost his entire business back in Sodom, he obviously found something to live on after the disaster. After all, they did continue to live after this (we're not sure where) and the daughters evidently had what they needed to raise their sons. In other words, the story doesn't tell us everything about what happened to Lot.

It's only telling us the parts that pertain to the point it's making. We can't simply assume that he died penniless and forlorn. For all we know, he probably reconnected with Abraham and started life over.

The importance of descendants – Since we live in an age when people are deliberately killing their offspring, it's hard to appreciate how important the children were to people in Bible times. Women were desperate to have children; it justified their existence in a world where possession and power and inheritance meant everything. Men wanted sons to carry on their name and honor, to work in the fields, and to keep the inheritance in the family.

The fact was, if nothing was done then Lot's name (or family, in other words) would die out immediately. It would be as if Lot had never lived, and that was unacceptable. Actually the girls were right: there probably weren't any men around who were decent enough to marry. If the Sodomites and Canaanites were representative of what kind of characters lived in the area, there were no options for a husband there. Going back to Abraham's camp wouldn't help either, because Lot was a nephew of Abraham and the uncle had no more sons for Lot's daughters. He had servants, but they wouldn't have been socially acceptable for Lot's daughters (we can't forget about their culture).

So it *was* true that unless something was done, Lot's line would die out forever.

Drinking wine – The text doesn't say that Lot got drunk. I don't believe that this is splitting hairs, either. Other Scriptures don't hesitate to tell us if someone got drunk. The Bible says that Noah got *drunk*, that Nabal got *drunk*,

that Uriah the Hittite got *drunk*, but it doesn't say that Lot got drunk. Yet sermons have focused on Lot the miserable old man drowning his misery with wine, something the Scripture doesn't teach at all. If Lot did the same, I believe that the text would have used the word and not spared him either. But evidently it's being very careful about how it says things, so that Peter can continue to make his claim about Lot's character, and the passage won't contain anything that obviously contradicts him.

It only says that the daughters "got him to drink wine." That can mean a whole range of things, from a little to a lot. Unfortunately many modern Christians think that drinking *any* amount of wine is getting drunk! That's simply not true; the Bible doesn't teach any such thing. The Bible does warn, however, against getting *drunk*. (For example: it may interest you to know that during the Passover meal the custom was for everyone to have at least three good sized cups of wine; they were consumed at various parts of the meal, according to ceremony, and nobody got drunk from it.) At any rate, it's a mistake to focus on the wine when the passage is trying to tell us something else.

Whatever you may think about drinking wine, someone would have to prove that Lot was drunk to convict him of sin, and this passage has no proof in it. One might say, "Doesn't the fact that he didn't know what his daughters were doing prove he was drunk?" Not so: even a little alcohol will make one sleep pretty deeply the first couple of hours. But, if you think about it, the daughters probably wouldn't have achieved their goal if Lot was genuinely drunk.

Lot would never have done it – One of the most important points of this passage

seems to have escaped people studying this story. Unless his daughters tricked him, Lot would never have done such a thing. Awake and conscious, the thought would have been repulsive to him, since he was a *righteous ... righteous ... righteous* man.

Why do we consistently focus on Lot the sinner when it was everyone else who was sinning? Is it that Peter's enigmatic statement about his righteousness angers us and we're trying to prove otherwise? Was this ugly incident Lot's fault? He had no conscious part in it! It was foisted upon him by his daughters, completely against his wishes and without his knowledge. Was he at fault for their wickedness in any way? Couldn't he have taught them better than that? But that's the point: he probably did! If he wouldn't have done such a thing consciously, then he surely would have taught his girls better morals when they were younger. Just because children turn out badly doesn't mean the parents failed. Many times that does happen; but not always. For all we know, he did his best teaching his family the fear of God. We simply have no text saying either one way or the other except the constant testimony from Peter about Lot's righteous character. Why, then, are we ready to condemn Lot for things we have no proof for?

Incest – There's no question that what the girls did was detestable in God's sight. There were Laws given to Israel against this very kind of thing. It was a bad solution to a serious problem.

You will also notice a peculiar thing about a few other Laws that Moses gave Israel – some of them condemn the Patriarchs themselves. For example, one law (Leviticus 18:18) forbids a man to sleep with his wife's sister while still

married to his wife; both, it says, must be put to death for such an abomination. The trouble is, Jacob himself did this while married to Leah – he also married her sister Rachel and had children by her too. Do we therefore condemn him? Another example in Leviticus 18:9 – it says not to sleep with one's sister, even a half sister. The problem is, Abraham himself did this: he married his half-sister Sarah. Neither of these men were condemned by posterity for what they did. Not that we're making a point to ignore the Law, but in God's providence he sometimes does things in our lives that, in themselves immoral according to the Law, turn out to further his purposes. So although what Lot's daughters did was wrong, the LORD certainly overruled their intentions and brought about a remarkable turn of events that he had planned for a long time.

Judgment – One interesting thing about this story is that the LORD doesn't seem to be done with judging people yet. "Judgment" means to discern the truth of a matter, like a judge in a courtroom. The LORD judged Sodom, through the fact-finding mission of the angels, to be a wicked city and deserving of destruction. He uncovered the heart of Lot's wife and she fell to the same destruction as the city she loved. Now he is uncovering the hearts of Lot's daughters: children of a righteous man, they nevertheless show their true colors by doing what is an abomination to the LORD. When we would think that all is well, the LORD knows better and promises to expose our hearts to the light so that all can see.

And what is more remarkable, who keeps coming out clean in spite of our most rigorous examination, in spite of the wickedness all around him, in spite of the attempts to involve him in

everyone else's wickedness and punishment? This is clearly the hand of the Judge of all men, when a man survives the most determined attempts of generations of critics to ruin his character and yet not a single "fact" will stand up in court to condemn him. Instead of criticizing and kicking at Lot, we should be hoping for such a watertight testimony for ourselves – in spite of what others see in our lives to the contrary!

Somewhat of a miracle – It has been noticed that it would be quite remarkable for even one of the girls to get pregnant from this single incident, since a woman has to be at a certain point in her reproductive cycle in order to conceive. For *both* of them to get pregnant is quite amazing. One wonders how much of a hand in this that God himself had, especially in light of what we will see in the next point.

The remarkable outcome – This is one of those situations where a man or woman does something for one purpose and the LORD overrules for another purpose. The daughters wanted to perpetuate their father's line (a worthy enough goal) and turned to incest to do it (an unworthy means of reaching that end). The LORD also wanted to perpetuate Lot's line, but what an outcome!

Notice one of the sons – Moab. He was the father of the Moabites, who would often have dealings with Israel through the rest of the Old Testament. In fact, both nations from these two boys proved to be very troublesome for the people of God as time went on. But one exception stands out like a brilliant ray of light from Heaven: Lot was the father of Moab, and Moab was the forefather of Ruth, who was the wife of Boaz, who

was the great grandfather of King David. What is even more amazing is that David is the direct ancestor of Christ – which makes Lot the *forefather of Jesus Christ!*

I'm sure that neither the daughters nor Lot realized the astonishing insight behind those fateful words – “... that we may preserve offspring from our father.” (Genesis 19:32) This situation wasn't the only time that Christ's less illustrious ancestors fell “accidentally” into the Family that brought forth the Savior. For example, there is the ugly situation between Judah and Tamar which resulted in the birth of Perez, another of Christ's ancestors. (Genesis 38)² But the LORD with his wisdom works wonders through unsearchable providence; what starts out as a blemish in a righteous man's life helps to bring about the greatest event in the history of mankind. Christ certainly realized his humble beginnings; but Lot would have been humbled at the thought that his own blood would run through his family's tree to eventually rise in the greatest life ever given for the sins of man.

The Point – Please don't miss the significance of this passage of Scripture. Its point is this: *the LORD knows how to deliver his people from the wrath that comes down on the wicked*. Peter told us what to see in this story, and if we read it with that in mind (not for other issues, which complicate the point and tend to steer us off into unprofitable speculation and even wrong interpretations) then we

² By the way, notice how the Bible genealogies all capitalize on Christ being “of the tribe of Judah” – even in light of how it happened. This points to the fact that the Lord's eternal purposes are more important than the local circumstances. God is big enough to handle the problems involved.

will learn what God wants us to learn from it.

And the other side of the coin is that Lot heeded the warning “to flee from the wrath to come.” He believed the Word of the LORD; he obeyed God’s command to get out of Sodom *now*. He was an alien in a dark world; he didn’t belong there anymore. Who of us have taken that warning to heart so thoroughly and obediently as Lot did?

The doctrine of deliverance, or the LORD rescuing his people, is one of the major doctrines of the entire Bible. For instance, here are some of the better known rescues recorded in the Old and New Testaments:

- *The Israelites rescued from Egypt*
- *The Twelve Tribes rescued from their pagan neighbors through judges*
- *David rescued from King Saul*
- *Hezekiah and the Jews rescued from Sennacherib*
- *The woman caught in adultery rescued by Jesus from the Pharisees*
- *Peter rescued from prison by the angel*

- *Paul rescued from the Jews who were trying to kill him*
- *And, of course, all Christians rescued from sin and death by the blood of Christ*

If we could state the doctrine of deliverance more precisely we might say it like this: The LORD rescues, and he rescues a helpless people, from some situation that would otherwise be the end of them, and takes them to a safe place. And it happened only because Lot was under the protection of the Heir of the Covenant. Lot fits this category nicely; he therefore should take his place alongside the more famous rescues of God’s people recorded in the Bible – and Peter makes sure that he does in *his* book. It may not look as if he was being cared for, but then faith sees the spiritual realities that this world’s wisdom doesn’t understand.

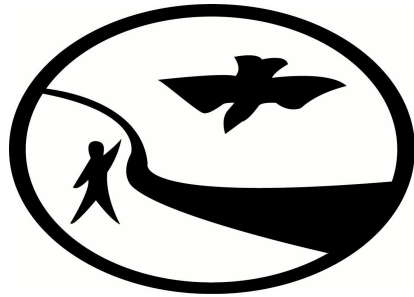
So to truly understand the story of Lot, we need to use the right hermeneutic. The wrong hermeneutic turns it all into moralisms, and we end up accusing Lot of “crimes” that we ourselves are guilty of.

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