

Genesis 19  
Psalm 82  
Luke 17:20-37

“Hospitality and Judgment, Part 2”

July 26, 2009

Psalm 82 is a fitting response to Genesis 19  
as it warns the nations that judgment is coming.

**Introduction: “The Days of Lot”**

Jesus says that if you want to understand the kingdom of God,  
then you need to understand the “days of Noah” and the “days of Lot.”

What does he mean?

Why should we care about Noah?

Why should we care about Lot?

This is ancient history!

We live in the present.

We are busy in the present!

Why should we think about Lot or Noah?

And passages like Luke 17 remind us of how central the Old Testament story is  
to the story of Jesus.

In our day the church has amnesia.

We have forgotten who we are.

We are so preoccupied with ourselves and our own lives,  
that we no longer understand how we fit into this story.

Jesus says that if you don’t understand the days of Lot or the days of Noah,  
then you will not truly understand who he is or what he is doing.

There are lots of parallels between chapters 18 and 19.

Lot rises to greet the angels at the city gate (like Abraham, but he doesn’t run)

He offers hospitality – but it is not as sumptuous a feast.

His wife is included in the promise – but unlike Sarah she looks back and is lost

There is laughter in both stories – as Sarah is promised Laughter (Isaac)

but Lot’s sons-in-law laugh at his “jest.”

Both stories are about land, seed, and the nations –

but one points to blessing, and the other to cursing.

Lot is in many respects a failure as host, citizen, husband, and father,  
but still he is fundamentally different from Sodom

## 1. The Hospitality of Sodom (19:1-11)

*The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom.*

They came to Abraham in the heat of the day.

They come to Lot in the evening (literally, in the darkness).

They have come to the spiritually dark city of Sodom by night.

The whole episode takes place in darkness.

Lot is an ambiguous figure in scripture.

He is called “righteous Lot” – because he is different from the men of Sodom –  
but he is also a problematic figure –

because he was sitting in the gate of Sodom.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the seat of scoffers (Psalm 1:1).

But Lot sits in the gate of Sodom.

In the following verses he will stand *against* the way of sinners,  
and in the end he will walk in the counsel of the angels.

But in choosing to sit in the seat of scoffers, Lot has compromised himself –  
and great evil will come to himself, his family, and even to Abraham’s seed.

The angels have come in order to investigate the outcry (18:21).

How bad is Sodom?

Are there any righteous left in Sodom?

*When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them*

(Notice that Lot has arisen from the seat of scoffers)

*and bowed himself with his face to the earth*

*2 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.”*

*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.*

There is a reason why Lot is called “righteous.”

He imitates his uncle in hospitality,

urging, even compelling the strangers to stay with him.

I find it interesting that *hospitality* is the test of righteousness in this case!

How do you treat strangers?

How do you treat newcomers, sojourners?

(The assumption is that you treat each other well!  
Notice that the men of Sodom seem quite “chummy.”  
They get along together just fine!  
The question is how do you treat strangers?)

There is a good question for churches today:  
when you find out that someone is from out of town,  
do you then ignore them?  
It is very easy for our “welcome” of visitors to be oriented towards  
“getting new members.”  
But if we would be righteous,  
then we should delight to offer hospitality to strangers –  
especially those who can do nothing to repay us.

And this is contrasted with the “anti-hospitality” of Sodom.

*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.”*

Verse 4 emphasizes that this is the entire male population of the city.  
Here you can see the difference between “community” and “hospitality.”  
The men of Sodom have a tight-knit community.  
It is an intergenerational community,  
including both the older men and the younger men!  
It is a community that has a remarkable unity of purpose and mission.

But it is a community that lacks hospitality.  
It is a community that does not love the stranger and alien,  
but seeks to use and abuse the stranger for its own selfish purposes.

I want you to see that the fundamental problem with Sodom was not its homosexuality.  
According to Genesis, the fundamental problem with Sodom  
was how it treated strangers.  
Having said that, it is also clear that Genesis views homosexual gang rape  
as the most despicable thing imaginable.  
As we have seen (and will continue to see)  
Genesis deals with all kinds of sexual deviance,  
but this is one of the few places where the text provides  
an explicit condemnation of sexual misconduct.

Scripture everywhere portrays homosexual relations as contrary to nature (Rom 1),  
and Leviticus 18:22 says that lying with a man as with a woman  
is an abomination.

We need to be careful to affirm that *all* sexual sin is equally sinful.

A person who struggles with homosexual temptation  
is no different than a person who struggles with heterosexual temptation.  
Heterosexual sin is no better than homosexual sin.

Sin is sin.

And it must be repented of.

But some would say that there is a difference:  
after all, someone who struggles with heterosexual temptation  
has a legitimate outlet (namely, marriage),  
while those who struggle with homosexual temptation  
are simply told that they have to squelch their desires.

I do not at all wish to minimize the struggle endured by those faithful Christians  
who face homosexual temptations.  
But I cannot allow the equation of lust and love –  
as though marriage is an outlet for heterosexual lust.  
If I treat my wife as a sex object, I must repent.

It is true that someone with homosexual lusts  
cannot think, speak, or act on those inclinations  
without sinning against God.  
But it is also true that someone with heterosexual lusts  
cannot think, speak, or act on those inclinations  
without sinning against God!

I've known homosexuals who wanted to change,  
but could not change themselves.  
But I've known many more heterosexuals who wanted to change  
(who detested their adulterous lusts)  
but could not change themselves!

In terms of the way we treat people,  
we should make no distinction  
between the penitent homosexual and the penitent heterosexual.  
And from what I can see,  
that covers pretty much the entire post-pubescent penitent population!

Of course, what we are dealing with in Sodom  
is not a penitent population at all.

And so Lot casts his lot with righteous Abraham  
and boldly stands against the way of sinners:  
*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.*

Note that he calls them brothers.

This may simply be a rhetorical flourish,  
but it may also indicate how closely he has become enmeshed  
in the community of Sodom – that he would call them “brothers.”

Nonetheless, it is precisely this speech that Peter identifies  
as demonstrating that he is “righteous Lot” in 2 Peter 2:5-10.  
Peter says that

6 if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes  
he [God] condemned them to extinction,  
making them an example  
of what is going to happen to the ungodly;  
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);  
9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials,  
and to keep the unrighteous under punishment  
until the day of judgment,  
10 and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion  
and despise authority.

While there is much in Lot’s behavior that is scandalous,  
he demonstrates that he still defends righteousness in his relations with others.

And in order to understand what comes next,  
we need to understand how Lot would be thinking.

According to the ancient laws of hospitality

Lot must defend his guests against all assaults.

He knows that if he simply turns them down and sends them away,  
they will most likely break down the door  
and do what they want.

As he sees it, there is only one alternative:

*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.”*

It horrifies us to hear this.

We cannot imagine this.

But in Lot’s view

(and I’m not saying he’s right)

the only way that he can protect those who are under his care  
is by sacrificing his daughters’ virginity.

By the way, Lot is not an isolated example.  
In Judges 19, the story of Sodom is replayed in Gibeah.  
And the old man in Judges 19 will imitate Lot in Genesis 19,  
and offer his daughter and the man's concubine  
in place of the stranger whom he has taken in.

But let me point out that Lot is not an example to imitate.  
The point of Old Testament history is *not* to give us moral examples,  
but to help us understand the story of salvation –  
how God has redeemed us from our sin and misery through Jesus Christ –  
*in spite of* our persistent foolishness!

And so (unlike the men of Sodom) we need to keep listening.

*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.*

Note the hospitality theme again.  
While Lot was sitting in the city gate earlier,  
as a respected elder of the city,  
we discover here that they still view him as an outsider.

*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.*

## **2. The Deliverance of Lot and Fleeing from the Judgment to Come (19:12-22)**

*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."*

Only now do the angels reveal their purpose in coming to Sodom.  
They have come to pour out the eschatological wrath of God.  
This is nothing less than the coming of the final judgment upon Sodom.  
Lot has demonstrated his righteousness in showing kindness to strangers –  
at considerable risk to himself and his family.  
God had told Abraham that if ten righteous men were found in Sodom,  
he would refrain from destroying it.  
But in fact, there is only one righteous man.

And so the angels offer Lot the way of salvation:  
flee from the city of destruction!

*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.*

It is not clear if the sons-in-law had been in the crowd or in the house.  
Were they among “all the people” or not?

Either way, they had seen the power of the angels in blinding the crowd.  
But they scoff at Lot and take him for a jester.

*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.*

Why?

Why does he linger on the edge of a precipice?  
Why does he toy with delay?

Do you not linger at the threshold of the city of destruction?  
Left to ourselves we are *exactly* like Lot,  
and we would dilly-dally around until it was too late –  
unless the LORD was merciful!

*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.*

*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!”*

Escape to the hills.

What does that mean?

In verse 27 we will hear that Abraham looked out over the valley.

I would suggest that “escape to the hills” means, “go to Abraham.”

But Lot will not.

He had turned away from Abraham in chapter 13

and he had set his heart on a valley that was like the garden of the LORD,  
like the land of Egypt.”

We didn't spend much time on that description.

But that is an interesting juxtaposition of images!

The garden of the LORD was the land of life,  
a lush and verdant land of delight –  
the place where Genesis began.

The land of Egypt was also a fruitful land,  
but otherwise Egypt is a land of death –  
the place where Genesis will end.

Sodom is right in the middle –

in between the garden of the LORD and the land of Egypt.

Sodom is an attempt to return to the Garden without God.

And so Lot begs to be allowed to keep a portion of Sodom for himself –  
one little remnant of “the garden of the LORD.”

I said last time that with the measure that Abraham judged,  
so also his descendents were judged.

And God had mercy on the seed of Abraham.

So now the children of Lot will be judged according to their father's judgment.  
And in the family of Lot,

Sodom and Gomorrah yet live.

And so God says,

*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.*

### **3. The Destruction of Sodom and the End of the World (19:23-29)**

*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.*

The fire and brimstone from heaven is a picture of the final judgment.

God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah and all the valley  
as a demonstration of what he will do on the final day,  
when he will destroy the wicked forever.

*26 But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.*



Remember Lot's wife?

She could not leave her old life behind her without a wistful glance.  
And since she longed to return,  
she was joined to its fate.

But why did she become a pillar of salt?

A city would be strewn with salt  
to condemn it to perpetual barrenness and desolation.  
And even as Sodom was utterly destroyed,  
so Lot's wife was made utterly barren.  
She was returned to the tohu vbohu (the barren wasteland) of judgment.

Ambrose was the pastor of Milan – the Roman capital, the imperial residence –  
at the end of the fourth century.

Christianity had become legal,

but the imperial court still retained much of its pagan past.

Ambrose – a pastor to emperors and nobles – commented on this passage,

“He who renounces the vices

and rejects the way of life of his fellow citizens is in flight like Lot.

Such a person does not look behind himself

but enters that city which is above...

and he does not withdraw from it until the death of the chief priest

who bore the sin of the world.

He indeed died once, but he dies for each person

who is baptized in Christ's death,

that we may be buried together with him

and rise with him and walk in the newness of life.

Your flight is a good one if your heart

does not act out the counsels of sinners and their designs....

Your flight is a good one if you direct your footsteps

away from the countenance of fools.”

Now the narrative returns us briefly to Abraham:

*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.*

Only now does it become clear that God saved Lot because of Abraham.

Until now, we might have thought that Lot was sufficiently righteous in himself.

But now we discover that salvation rests solely upon the covenant mediator.

You see, brothers and sisters, we would like to think that we are like Abraham.  
But in fact, we are very much like Lot.

We are sort of like Abraham –  
and sort of like the men of Sodom  
(far more than we would like to admit!).  
We have lived too long in this city of destruction,  
and we have made our peace with its inhabitants.  
And if truth be told,  
there is an aroma of smoke on our clothes!

And it is precisely in light of God's promises to Abraham  
that we need to understand the epilogue to this story.

#### **4. Righteous Lot? Land, Seed, and the Nations (19:30-38)**

*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.*

Having successfully interceded for Zoar, now Lot is afraid to live there.  
He has recognized that Zoar is no better than Sodom,  
and so he will not receive the inheritance that he had requested!

What would have happened if he had fled to the hills as the angels commanded?  
Might Lot have returned to Abraham and found peace?

Instead he winds up in the hills anyway –  
but instead of finding peace – instead of escaping the judgment of Sodom,  
Sodom finds its way into his cave.

You do realize, of course,  
that this is the way that sin *always* works?  
The very thing you try to avoid will be the thing that haunts your steps –  
until you repent and believe the gospel!

And so the man who would have let his daughters be gang-raped  
is gang-raped by his daughters!

*31 And the firstborn said to the younger,  
“Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to 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.”*  
Some try to excuse them by claiming that they thought  
that all the earth had been destroyed.  
But they plainly knew that the town of Zoar still stood.

Lot will receive a land (the inheritance of Sodom).  
Lot will receive a seed (from the incest of his daughters).  
And thus the future of Abraham's seed and Lot's seed will be tempestuous.

*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.*

It is safe to say that the original readers of Genesis would have been horrified by this.  
But the point of the text is not a moral warning against incest.

*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.*

As Adrian Dieleman says so well,  
"the concern of Genesis is not with what happened in the cave  
though it is bad and sinful and wicked and evil.  
The concern of Genesis is with what comes out  
of that dark, creepy, and evil cave."  
<http://www.trinityurcvisalia.com/sermons/gen19v36.html>

Because what comes out of that dark, creepy, evil cave  
are the Ammonites and the Moabites.  
And those who first would have listened to these stories being read  
knew all about the Ammonites and Moabites.

The Moabites enticed Israel away from following the LORD at Baal-Peor  
in the wilderness.

How?

Because the Moabite women invited Israelite men  
to join them in sexual immorality and idolatry.

In other words, the daughters of Moab imitated their foremother.

Sodom lives on in the Ammonites and Moabites.  
Moab and Ammon come out of this dark, evil cave  
and continue to be a thorn in Israel's side for generations,  
a last remnant of Sodom to remind Israel  
of the danger of turning away from the LORD.

And so Moses says "No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the LORD.  
Even to the tenth generation,  
none of them may enter the assembly of the LORD forever  
because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way,  
when you came out of Egypt." (Dt 23:3-4)

Notice the importance of hospitality!  
Ammon and Moab are cursed because they did not show kindness to strangers –  
they did not imitate Lot,  
they imitated Sodom.

And in the end Moab and Ammon join Sodom in eternal destruction.  
In Zephaniah 2:8-9, the LORD declares,  
"I have heard the taunts of Moab and the revilings of the Ammonites,  
how they have taunted my people and made boasts against their territory.  
Therefore, as I live, declares the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,  
Moab shall become like Sodom,  
and the Ammonites like Gomorrah,  
a land possessed by nettles and salt pits, and a waste forever."

Their grandmother had been turned to a pillar of salt because she loved Sodom.  
Now Moab and Ammon will join her.

**Conclusion:**

But not every descendent of Moab and Ammon will be destroyed.  
Because from the loins of Lot comes Ruth the Moabitess.  
Out of this dark, creepy, evil cave  
comes one who repents of her lineage,  
and will show hospitality to her mother-in-law.  
And so she is joined to the line of Messiah.

But this shouldn't surprise us.

It seems as though every time God condemns someone to destruction,  
he yet graciously unites a remnant of that people to his Son.  
He dooms the Canaanites to destruction,  
yet brings the Canaanite Rahab into the holy line.  
He declares that he will destroy the whole house of Ahab,  
but the blood of Ahab and Jezebel continues in Joash, the royal line.

And so out of this dark, creepy, evil cave

comes no one less than our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Seed of the Woman (and that woman sometimes is Lot's wife or daughters,  
a prostitute like Rahab or a wicked idolater like Jezebel)  
the Seed of Abraham (but also the descendent of Lot, Sodom, and the Canaanites)  
the Son of David (and the heir of Ahab).

Jesus has taken up the scum of the earth in his own ancestry,  
and has taken upon himself the curse of all mankind,  
and now he comes and bids us  
flee from the wrath to come!

And so when you hear Jesus calling you to remember Lot's wife,  
he is bidding you remember *his own foremother*.

Which contains both a warning – and a promise!  
There is a warning: judgment *is* coming!  
But the one who warns you is also the one who bids you come to him  
and he will save you!  
Flee to Jesus – the holy mountain where God dwells with his people.  
Because as the Seed of Abraham, the heir of the world,  
he alone is the one who can deliver his people from the wrath to come!

This Jesus is the one who shows us hospitality,  
and welcomes us strangers and aliens into his home.

Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest!