

Introduction

This passage divides nicely into four sections about Abraham and Lot. They are:

1. God's Plan and Abraham's Intercession for Sodom, 18:16-33**A. God's Plan**

God's plan is to go to Sodom and Gomorrah and see if the wickedness has been reported accurately. Their "sin is very grave." We will see how grave in the next section.

Abraham was privileged to be "in the know" about God's plans with respect to Sodom and Gomorrah. God's rationale for this was that Abraham would become a great nation, and all other nations would be blessed in him. This is a restatement of the Abrahamic covenant. The act of judgment that God is about to unleash on these wicked cities does have an effect on Abraham in this sense. It is also relevant to Abraham because his nephew Lot lives in Sodom.

Notice that in verse 19 God says that He has *known* Abraham. Similarly, it is important that God knows us as well, in a salvific sense. Mat. 7:23, 1 Cor. 8:3, and John 6:67-70 refer to this notion. God's knowledge of Abraham (and us) is not without a purpose. The goal is that Abraham may teach his descendants to keep God's ways, to do righteousness and justice. There is some connection between their doing this and the accomplishment of the Abrahamic promises. (Note well: I do not believe this conditions the Abrahamic covenant; it may have an impact on the timing of them.)

It is interesting that God is going to "check out" the situation in more detail (20-22), even though He already knows everything! See Prov. 18:13. God does not "answer the matter before he hears it."

B. Abraham's Intercession

In the remainder of the chapter, Abraham intercedes for the wicked cities that if there are a certain number of righteous people living there, that God would not destroy it. In these verses is one of the classic statements about God's justice. Verse 25 says, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" The answer is "Of course He will!" Abraham's point here is that God would not slay the righteous along with the wicked. Sometimes God does do that for reasons well-known to Him, however enigmatic it may see to us.

Notice Abraham's boldness in making these requests. He "came near" (v. 23). Though this is often called Abraham's intercessory prayer, it hardly seems like "prayer" in the sense that he is face to face with God, talking to Him. Prayer for us is a more "remote" thing (yet need not be less effective!).

Abraham started by asking if there were 50 righteous people in Sodom, that God would not destroy it. God responds positively to that request. Abraham went from 50 to 45, to 40, to 30, to 20, and finally to 10. What boldness. We can do the same (Heb. 4:16) on grounds far beyond what Abraham knew (the access provided by Jesus Christ).

The sad thing was that God did not find 10 righteous people in the city. He found Lot, Lot's wife, and their two daughters. The others refused to leave the doomed city.

2. Angels Come to Lot and Urge Him to Leave Sodom, 19:1-14

The Bible tells us that there were three men who came to see Abraham (18:2). One was the LORD (18:22). The other two who left Abraham were angels (19:1), but they are also called men (19:10). Pay attention to when the Bible uses the language of appearance. These angels appeared to be men but were really angels. This is certainly not misleading since we are told very plainly that they are angels.

We are told that Lot was sitting in the gate of the city. This means that he was one of the "elders" of the city, one of its judges (19:9). Whether it was his goal to reform the city or not, 2 Peter 2:7-8 tells us that his righteous soul was vexed with having to see the wickedness all around him.

Actually he tormented himself in this way, since he could simply have moved to get away from the sin. That may be a step necessary in your own life.

Lot was a hospitable fellow (Heb. 13:2) and wanted to ensure the safety of the men who had come into the city. He knew the wickedness of the city and what would happen to the men (he thought they were real men at this point) if they stayed out in the city square all night (19:1-3). That he was protecting from potential harm is evident in 19:8 where Lot says "do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under...my roof."

The wickedness of the city becomes evident in 19:4-9. Basically the whole city was given over to homosexuality. Some have tried to steer clear of this accusation by saying that the men of Sodom were inhospitable, or some other far-fetched thing. But the fact of the matter is that they were homosexuals, and probably lots of other sins were rampant in that city as well. The Bible is *very clear* that homosexuality is a sin (Lev. 18:22, 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:9-10).

Lot was acting in this instance in a very unprincipled way. He offered his two virgin daughters to the crowd. How shameful.

The two angel-men saved Lot's life from the wicked men of the city (19:10). This would be the first of two times that they saved his life (see the next section).

3. Angels Drag Lot out of Sodom and the City is Destroyed, 19:15-29

It seems strange that so much urging would be necessary on the part of the angels to get Lot and his family to understand the need to leave this city, particularly after the miracle of the blinding of the men of the city, and their oracle that the city would be destroyed.

The people who were offered salvation from the destruction of the city included Lot, his wife, his two virgin daughters (19:8, 15-16), and at least two other daughters who had married Lot's sons-in-law (v. 14). Assuming that Lot had four daughters altogether, then there were a total of 8 people that were told to leave the city. Only four took up the offer, and that only after the angels basically dragged them out of the city (19:17). The text says that the LORD was merciful to Lot. How true it is that God is merciful to us as well.

Lot complained that to go to the mountains was too dangerous. He wanted to go to the city called Zoar. It is ironic that later on we find Lot going to live in the mountains (19:30).

At verse 27, the scene changes. Now Abraham saw the cities in the plain below his vantage point where he had spoken with the LORD the day before. Abraham saw the smoke of the cities. Verse 29 comments that God remembered Abraham. How so? Well, He was merciful to Lot (19:16) on account of the prayer of Abraham in 18:23-33. What an encouragement to intercede for others!

4. Immorality in Lot's Family, 19:30-38

Lot's two daughters were impatient for husbands and they wanted to preserve the lineage of their father. Probably any sons that Lot had were killed in Sodom (19:12 mentions sons, though we are not sure how many). So they resorted to incest. Here is one good illustration of why it is important to avoid alcohol—it leads to other serious sins.

The law of sowing and reaping applies here too. The daughters and father's sin resulted in the Moabites and Ammonites, future adversaries of the nation of Israel. In Deut. 2:9, 19 these nations were to be left alone by the nation of Israel as it began to possess the land promised to them by God. But in Num. 22:7 we are told that the Moabites devised some schemes against the children of Israel to get them to be cursed by God. People from Moab and Ammon are not allowed to enter the congregation of Israel because they did not treat Israel kindly (Deut. 23:3-4).

Conclusion

Here are some principles: Avoidance of immorality and drunkenness, not hesitating to leave an evil situation, hospitality, intercessory prayer, and the importance of God knowing you.