

On the Beginning

22. Judgment on Sodom

NOTE ESPECIALLY Genesis 18 and 19

In the 18th Chapter of Genesis, we find another occasion when “*the LORD appeared*” to Abraham. This same phrase is found in Chapter 12 (v. 7) and Chapter 17 (v. 1). Exactly what happened when God “appeared” to a man in those ancient times? When “*the angel of the LORD*” appeared to somebody, He often was really a manifestation of God Himself! Go back to Genesis 16, and follow carefully verses 7 through 13. Hagar said that it was “*the LORD that spake unto her*,” although the text says it was the angel of the Lord. Read also Genesis 22:15-18. In this passage it is obvious that the Lord was speaking when His Angel was speaking to Abraham! So sometimes God showed Himself in the form of an angel called the Angel of the LORD. The Bible clearly teaches that God has no visible form or body in His essential state (See John 1:18 and 4:24), but God can take on a visible form in order to make an appearance. This is what happens in this chapter. When “*three men*” stood by Abraham, one of them was the LORD, and the other two were actual angels!

1. The Visit of **Three**.

Genesis 18:1 says that God appeared to Abraham. Then verse 2 says it was three men. In verse 3, Abraham calls the Leader of the three “*My LORD*” (*Adonai*), a name he used for God in Genesis 15:2 and 8. We remember that this name means “Master,” and that it can be used of human authorities, too, as Sarah does in verse 12. However, the whole scene points to the Leader of the “*three men*” being God in visible manifestation. God assured Abraham of the fulfillment of the promise he had been given in Genesis 17:15-21. In reaffirming this promise, the Leader says, “*I will*,” indicating that He is the LORD (v. 10). Sarah laughed at the idea (vs. 11-13), just as her husband had done a few weeks before, but then God responds by asking the great question,

“Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (verse 14)

The answer to this question can be found in Jeremiah 32:17 and Luke 1:37. If you look up the verse in Jeremiah 32, keep reading all the way to Jeremiah 33:3, you’ll get a real blessing that you just might need today.

2. The Departure of the **Two**.

Follow verses 16 through 22 carefully. See that “*the men*” were headed toward Sodom, where Lot lived, and that after the LORD spoke to Abraham for a while,

“...the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the Lord.”

Then the first verse of Chapter 19 says that, “*thence came two angels to Sodom at even*.” In other words, the two that were real angels left the LORD alone with Abraham when

they went to the city. Notice that the reason they were going to Sodom was to “*see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it*” (v. 21). Apparently reports of Sodom’s wickedness had come to God’s throne (perhaps by the prayers of the righteous), and God wanted to find out if they were true. What on earth could this mean? Doesn’t God know everything? The meaning was that God was going to *test* the wickedness of Sodom by the coming of His messengers to town. How they were treated would determine the city’s fate.

3. The Prayers of One.

Chapter 18 ends with the amazing intercession of Abraham for Sodom. It concludes with the LORD promising not to judge the city if merely ten righteous people were there. Now Lot was “*righteous*” in the sense of justified in God’s sight, saved (See II Peter 2:6-9). If he had turned his wife to righteousness, that would have given Sodom two righteous people. Chapter 19 teaches that Lot had two daughters at home, and more than one married daughter (See verses 8, 12-14, and 30). If Lot had reached his girls and their husbands for God, there would have been at least eight righteous people in Sodom. Of course, he may have had three married daughters, which would have given his family (including sons-in-law) ten members, thus fulfilling the condition of mercy worked out with God in Abraham’s intercession. Even if he had only two married daughters, might we not have expected a righteous man living so long in the city to have turned two more to righteousness? But apparently he failed to reach very many for the true God. For this reason, Sodom was destroyed. Intercession is praying for others, and it is a powerful practice! Look up Isaiah 59:4-16 and I Timothy 2:1. Christians ought to pray for individual sinners, for cities, for nations, and for the world! They ought also to live and witness in a way that will win others.

4. The Fate of Lot’s Family.

Chapter 19 tells the sad story of a believer’s life ruined, and his family destroyed, because of his own compromise with evil! In the first verse, we find Lot sitting in the gate of Sodom, the place where the leaders of the city sat to make big decisions. Here is evidence of Lot’s descent into conformity with the world (Romans 12:2). In Genesis 13:12, he “*pitched his tent toward Sodom.*” In Genesis 14:12, Lot “*dwelt in Sodom.*” In Genesis 19, he “*sat in the gate of Sodom*” to “*be a judge*” (v. 9) He called the worst of the vile in the city his “*brethren*” (v. 7). His undedicated life got him ahead in the sinful city, but it cost him dearly!

- A. It cost him his decency and courage (vs. 4-8, 15-23).
- B. It cost him the respect of his family (vs. 12-14).
- C. It cost him the power to win his family to God (vs. 14-17, 24-26, 29-35).
- D. It cost him the opportunity to have godly offspring (vs. 36-38).

You can be saved and get to Heaven, but still lose a lot on this earth. The results of your life and the rewards you receive from Christ depend on the life you live after you are saved! Read I Corinthians 3:14-15.
