

Biblical Forensics ©

“Deliverance before Judgment” Part 20

As I type this, the global depression is accelerating with Venezuela and France declaring financial emergencies. Other nations like Brazil and China are well along and heading down the road to collapse. This is the next phase before war proceeds to the shooting stage. This news alone is enough to strike fear and trepidation into the hearts of people everywhere.

Hilton Sutton, a now deceased pastor and evangelist, made the following statement more than two decades ago: *“When the bombs are descending, the saint will be ascending!”* All humanity is standing at the gates of hell. However, God has made it clear that He will rescue His children before everything comes falling down throughout the world.

There is an interesting scenario that resonates with the world global financial crisis right now and it mirrors the current world situation. A former Jewish employer I once worked for often said, *“Money makes the world go round”*. The world moves on credit and that was evident when the South Korean shipping firm Hanjin went bankrupt in September of 2016. Eighty five of their leased or owned container-ships were anchored off-shore around the world. They were loaded with Christmas season retail merchandise and unable to deliver five billion dollars in merchandise cargo because the firm could not pay for oil, supplies, and food for the crews of those ships. Cash is “king” but credit keeps the goods flowing smoothly. That scenario involves a grand plan to push the world towards a cashless society. For seventy years now, the American Banking Association has been engaged in a future financial system whereby the world would conduct business without the use of cash. “Deliverance before Judgment” precedes the “Beast” system that is coming. Another excellent example is how God dealt with Abraham’s nephew Lot in the region of Sodom and Gomorrah.

In Lot’s day, he and his family were “removed” before God rained down His judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. -(Genesis 19). God did not just “preserve” them through His wrath; He “removed” them **prior to judgment.** Jesus said that just before His return, it would be like the days of Noah -(Luke 17:26) and like the days of Lot -(Luke 17:28). Judgment in Sodom could not occur until Lot was removed -(Genesis 19:22). ***“While [Lot] lingered, the [angels] took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city ... Hurry, escape there, For I cannot do anything until you arrive there”*** -(Genesis 19: 16, 22). In other words, they were **forcibly removed** just prior to judgment, and that judgment could not commence until they arrived safely in their new city! The typology picture here is of a Rapture through Divine measures.

Considerable misunderstanding exists about the story and the theme of Sodom and Gomorrah. While it is one of the most interesting stories in the Bible, there are greater issues of importance in God's narrative of Lot and his family. From the larger content of Sodom and Gomorrah, God has chosen to convey the "Typology" and "Theme" of "Deliverance before Judgment" by using the life of Lot and his family to depict His example of mercy. Though Lot was living in this wicked city, he still had the same kind of courtesy, friendliness, and hospitality which characterized his uncle Abraham. Lot even invited the heavenly travelers to his home. We are told that Lot called the men of Sodom "my brothers" and politely asked them not to do this wickedness. Apparently city dwellers did not have the same view of hospitality as did tent dwellers like Abraham and Lot, who were tent dweller before moving to the city.

Lot lived in Sodom in order to enjoy its material advantages, but he was vexed or distressed by the sleazy conversation and sinful lifestyles of the "**wicked with their unlawful** (lawless, ungodly) **deeds**" as noted in 2nd Peter 2:7-8. In fact, he had spoken out against these things so often that the men of Sodom accused him of wanting to play the judge, even though he was a foreigner. They demanded he step aside, threatening to treat him worse than the two strangers in the narrative. -(Gen 19:9). Note:

- Those who hate to make changes hate those who reprove them, even though with ever so tender admonishments. Because they have seared their consciences, presumptuous sinners do as the Sodomites did by Lot, baffle their checks, stifle their accusations, press hard upon them, and stopped their mouths from reprimanding, and so **made themselves ripe for ruin**.
- Abuses offered to God's messengers and to faithful reprovers soon fill the measure of a person's wickedness, and **bring destruction without remedy**. "**He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.**" -(Proverbs 29:1). See also 2nd Chronicles 36:16. If reproofs do not produce a change of heart, there is no remedy. See 2nd Chronicles 25:16.^(a)

In Genesis 19:10-11, the two angels opened the door, pulled Lot inside, shut the door and struck all the men outside with a blindness or delusion that made them unable to find the door. This put an end to their attempt, and disabled them from pursuing it further. Justly those were struck blind who had been **deaf to reason**. Violent persecutors are often obsessed. So they could not push on their malicious designs against God's messengers -(Job 5:14-15). Yet, after these Sodomites were struck blind, they continued seeking the door, to break it down, till they were tired. No judgments will, of themselves, change the corrupt natures and purposes of wicked men. If their minds had not been blinded as well as their bodies, they would have said, as the magicians, "*This is the finger of God*", and would have submitted to it.^(a)

Since he had not recognized who they were, Lot called the angels men. At this point, they [the angels] told Lot that the Lord had sent them to destroy

Sodom because of the wickedness of its people. Since the word “angel” means messenger, they were revealing to Lot that they were angels.⁽¹⁾ They also urged Lot to get his family members and anyone else belonging to him out of the city before it was destroyed. Now this implies,

- The command of a great duty, which was to **do all he could for the salvation of those about him**, to snatch them as irons out of the fire. Note, those who through grace are themselves delivered out of a sinful state should do what they can for the deliverance of others, especially their relations.
- The offer of great favor. They did not ask whether he knew any righteous ones in the city fit to be spared: no, they knew there were none; but they ask what relations he had there, that, **whether righteous or unrighteous, they might be saved with him**. Note, bad people often fare the better in this world for the sake of their good relations. It is good being akin to a godly man.^(a) Verse 14 mentions that Lot went only to the men who were pledged to marry his daughters. Marriages in those days were arranged by the parents, often for business or social advantage.

The fact that Lot was willing to turn his daughters over to men whom he knew were wicked reveals that **material prosperity had blinded him to the tragedy that could come to his family**. He was distressed by the sins of Sodom, so he did not partake of them himself. But this was not enough for Lot. His “playing the judge” had not influenced anyone to turn away from their lawlessness. Perhaps he was taken up with acquiring wealth. What we have in the story of Lot is an illustration of a man who once lived close to his godly relatives and had backslidden and was living according to his sin nature. Lot had moved to Sodom, **even though he knew what it was**, and he “sat in the gate” -(Genesis 19:1). That sounds quite simple, but, in fact, sitting in the gate meant that Lot had so entered into the society of Sodom that he was a judge there -(Genesis 19:9). **In spite of his position, the men of Sodom had no respect for him because they knew he was a hypocrite**. As a result, the people of Sodom did not really take his religion seriously.

We may sit in judgment of the culture of that day, but protecting one’s guests required great sacrifice. Was Lot right to offer his own daughters in place of the men the Sodomites wanted? No. We can see in the story that the Lord’s messengers protected Lot and his daughters in spite of Lot’s lack of character and worldly viewpoint. Lot meant to appease the men of Sodom so that the hospitality of his house would not be damaged, but he made the wrong choice in offering his own daughters, and God’s messengers overruled him.⁽²⁾ This story reflects the immature thinking of Lot.

The angels were ready at dawn urging Lot to take his wife and daughters and leave, lest they be swept away in the coming judgment upon the city of Sodom. Apparently, even Lot himself did not take the angels seriously, or he

may have hesitated because he was not given opportunity to load up all his possessions. John Gill's Exposition of the Bible explains that:

- Lot was either loath to leave his goods and substance behind him, or
- He could have been waiting to see whether his sons-in-law would come to him, or
- As others have suggested, he was praying that God would spare the city.
- Though rather the sense is, that he was so amazed, and filled with horror and trembling at the thought of what judgments were coming on the city, that he was like one stupid, that had no power to stir nor move, which seems best to agree with the sense of the word 'use' here.^(b)

Here it becomes evident that the angels did not let him linger long. They grabbed his hand and the hands of his wife and daughters and hurried them out of the city. This was the Lord's mercy to them. **They were not acting on faith or obedience. Bringing them out of the city was pure, unmerited grace!** Then one of the angels commanded them to flee for their lives. Looking back in hesitation, with a desire to turn back, or stopping before they reached the mountains would mean that the judgment would sweep them away. He was urged to make the best of his way, when he was brought forth - (Genesis 19:17).

- He must still acknowledge himself to be in danger of being consumed, and be quickened by the law of self-preservation to flee for his life. Note, A **holy fear and trembling are found necessary to the working out of our salvation.**
- He must therefore mind his business with the utmost care and diligence.
 - **He must not hanker after Sodom:** Look not behind thee.
 - **He must not loiter by the way:** Stay not in the plain; for it would all be made a territory of judgment.
 - **He must not take up short of the place of refuge appointed him:** Escape to the mountain.

These are the commands given to those who **through grace are delivered out of a sinful state.**

- **Return not to sin and Satan,** for that is looking back to Sodom.
- **Rest not in self and the world,** for that is staying in the plain.
- **Reach towards Christ and heaven,** for that is escaping to the mountain.^(a)

Verses 18-20 reveal to us that Lot was convinced the angels were right, and that he should be thankful to the Lord and show faith and trust by obeying, and fleeing to the mountains. Instead, he was so overwhelmed by fear that he could not get to the mountains in time. Though he recognized God's grace and covenant love were the reasons the angels had saved his life, **he did not believe these were enough to keep him from dying in the coming disaster**. So he begged to be allowed to flee to a small town that was closer. Since Zoar means "small", that became the name of the town. The mountain was first appointed as a place of refuge for him to flee to, but:

- He begged for a city of refuge, one of the five that lay together, called Bela, -(Genesis 14:2, Genesis 14:18-20). It was Lot's weakness to think a city of his own choosing safer than the mountain of God's appointing. And he argued against himself when he pleaded, Thou hast magnified thy mercy in saving my life, and I cannot escape to the mountain; for could not He that plucked him out of Sodom, when he lingered, carry him safely to the mountain, though he began to tire? Could not He that saved him from greater evils save him from the less? He insists much in his petition upon the smallness of the place: It is a little one, is it not? Therefore, it was to be hoped, not as bad as the rest. This gave a new name to the place; it was called Zoar, a little one. Intercessions for little ones are worthy to be remembered.
- God granted him his request, though there was much infirmity in it, -(Genesis 19:21-22). See what favor God showed to a true saint, though weak.
 - Zoar was spared, to gratify him. Though his intercession for it was not, as Abraham's for Sodom, from a principle of generous charity, but merely from self-interest, yet God granted him his request, to show how much the fervent prayer of a righteous man avails.
 - Sodom's ruin was suspended until he was safe: **"I cannot do anything till thou shalt have come thither"**. Note: The very presence of good men in a place helps to hold off judgments. **See what care God takes for the preservation of his people.** The winds are held till God's servants are sealed, -(Revelation 7:3; Ezekiel 9:4).^(a)

The important point of this "Deliverance before Judgment" theme comes in Genesis 19:21-22. The angel granted the request, but **no judgment would come to the little town**. But Lot must hurry, for the angel could not do anything until Lot reached there.

In verse 26, we find Lot's wife, as the custom was, walking behind Lot. But she kept looking back steadily, wishfully, and with great desire, as the Hebrew text indicates. Perhaps she could not believe anything could happen to the lovely home she had in Sodom. Her heart was back in Sodom, and the implication is that she kept trailing and falling further and further behind. She

looked back from behind him. This seemed a small thing, but we are sure, by the punishment of it, that **it was a great sin, and exceedingly sinful:**

- **She disobeyed an express command**, and so **sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression**, which ruined us all.
- **Unbelief was at the bottom of it**; she questioned whether Sodom would be destroyed, and thought she might still have been safe in it.
- She **looked back upon her neighbors** whom she had left behind **with more concern than was fit**, now that their day of grace was over, and divine justice was glorifying itself in their ruin. See Isaiah 66:24.
- Probably she hankered after her house and goods in Sodom, and was loth to leave them. Christ intimates this to be her sin -(Luke 17:31-32); **she too much regarded her stuff.**
- **Her looking back revealed an inclination to go back**; and therefore our Savior uses it as a **warning against apostasy from our Christian profession**. We have all renounced the world and the flesh, and have set our faces heaven-ward; **we are in the plain, upon our probation**; and it is at our peril if we return into the interests we profess to have abandoned. **Drawing back is to risk eternal punishment, and looking back is towards it. Let us therefore fear losing our 'rest', noted in Hebrews 4:1.**

Furthermore, Lot's wife was struck dead in the place; yet her body did not fall down, but **stood fixed and erect like a pillar, or monument, not liable to waste nor decay**, as human bodies exposed to the air are, but metamorphosed into a metallic substance which would last perpetually. Come, **behold the goodness and severity of God** -(Romans 11:22), towards Lot, who went forward, goodness; towards his wife, who looked back, severity. Though she was nearly related to a righteous man, though better than her neighbors, and though a monument of distinguishing mercy in her deliverance out of Sodom, yet God did not secretly allow her disobedience; for **great privileges will not secure us from the wrath of God if we do not carefully and faithfully improve them**. This pillar of salt should season us. Since it is such a dangerous thing to look back, let us always press forward, - (Philippians 3:13, Philippians 3:14).^(a)

Verse 29 tells us that God had not forgotten what was really on Abraham's mind and in his heart when He petitioned him for Sodom. Since God knows everything, He never forgets anything but the sins He has forgiven and put out of existence or remembrance. When the Bible speaks of God remembering, it simply means God now breaks into the situation to do something about it. God sent His angels to bring Lot out of Sodom, **not because Lot deserved it, but for Abraham's sake**. While Sodom was not spared, **the intent of Abraham's intercession was answered**.

Addressing the “Biblical Typology” of “Deliverance before Judgment”, we see that Lot and his family were “removed” before God rained down His judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. **God did not just “preserve” them through His wrath, He removed them prior to judgment.** Jesus said that just before His return it would be like the days of Noah and the days of Lot. - (Genesis 17:26, 28).

Judgment in Sodom could not occur until Lot was removed. Remarkably **“While [Lot] was lingering, the [angels] took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside of the city. Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there”.** - (Genesis 19:16, 22). In plain words, they were forcibly removed prior to judgment, and judgment **could not commence** until they safely arrived in the new city!

Perhaps some of the strongest arguments that support a Pre-Tribulation Rapture are found in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, we see a reference to **“For the Law having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things”** -(Hebrews 10:1). The Holy Spirit explains that these Old Testament types were written for our learning. **“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope”** -(Romans 15:4). Genuine, born-again believers in Jesus Christ will experience “Deliverance before Judgment”. **God does not lie!** “Biblical Typology” does not make doctrine, it merely **reinforces the Will and Mind of God!**

Pastor Bob

Notes:

1. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/angel/>
2. <https://gotquestions.org/Lots-daughters.html>

Commentaries:

- a. Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible
- b. John Gill’s Exposition of the Bible