**Lesson 5**

**18-19 October 2021**

**Genesis 18:16 – 20:18**

***Another Perspective*:**

**Another Means of Communicating –** For the past two or three weeks we have been observing some of the different means of communicating God has used. We have seen direct speech, God coming to man in a vision, and appearing before someone as either the Angel of the Lord or as an ordinary man. In today’s lesson, God used yet another means to communicate when He wanted to give a warning to Abimelech. God appeared to Abimelech in a *dream*.

**Patriarchal Society –** The culture in which Sarah and Abraham lived was a *patriarchal society*. That is, each family and each tribe had a male leader who was responsible for everyone under his care. What he did affected everyone under him. We see this illustrated from the time of creation up to Abraham.

* God gave Adam the command about not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and Adam, as the head of the original family, was expected to pass that command along to Eve.
* Similarly, God spoke to Noah as the patriarchal head of his family. God told Noah of His plans to destroy the inhabitants of the earth with a worldwide flood, and He also gave Noah very detailed plans for how to build the ark.
* And we have seen how God spoke many times with Abraham, both to promise him land and offspring, and to predict various future events (the 400 years of slavery in Egypt in the distant future and the immediate judgment coming on Sodom and Gomorrah).

**What About the Women? –** The fact that God gave general commands and information to people through their male leaders does *not* mean that God never spoke to women. We saw last week how God shared in Sarah’s hearing the fact that she would have a baby within the year, and He spoke with her directly about her bitter laugh of unbelief. And we saw earlier how the Angel of the Lord came to Hagar in the wilderness to encourage her and bring her back to a place of safety. When God had specific information to share with a specific woman, He did so personally. But when He was giving general information that affected the entire family, tribe or nation, He always relayed that information through the patriarchal leader at the time.

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***Bible Study Fellowship’s Perspective:*** The following comments were taken from Lesson 12 of the BSF course on Genesis.

* The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were certainly entrenched in wickedness. Lot’s choice to live in Sodom definitely impacted his story. But rather than just dismiss Lot and these cities as the deserving recipients of God’s justice, we do well to consider God’s message to *us*. **There is “a lot of Lot” in all of us.** We too are greatly impacted by a world totally out of step with God and His standards. How do you live to make an impact, yet not be swept into the current of this world’s ways? pg 1
* **Lot’s wariness of evil and sense of righteousness indicated his internal struggle living in wicked Sodom**…Judging Lot’s heart condition based solely on his actions could leave us wondering about him. 2 Peter 2 tells us that the outright wickedness of Sodom warred against Lot’s sense of right and wrong. Three times in the space of two verses God inspired Peter to confirm Lot’s righteousness. As Peter explains, *“If God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if He rescued* ***Lot, a righteous man****, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless (for* ***that righteous man****, living among them day after day, was tormented in* ***his righteous soul*** *by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)—if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.”* pg 3-4
* Lot separated from Abraham, not just geographically but also in terms of his life pursuits. Lot tolerated sin and reaped sin’s consequences in his last days—fear, shame, insecurity and misery. The depraved standards of Sodom corrupted the choices of Lot’s daughters. Justified by their desire to bear children, they got Lot drunk and committed intentional incest with their father. **They immortalized their sin in the names they gave their sons.** Moab means “from father” and Ammon means “son of my people”. pg 4

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***Speaking of Geography –*** *Before we listen to Jen Wilkin’s video, let’s look at a map to locate two cities mentioned in today’s lesson. These are places that are probably not that familiar to most of us, so it is helpful to use a map to allow us to visualize where the story is taking place.*

**Jen Wilkin, *God of Covenant* video #3: *God Visits,* part 2**

**An Important Lesson** – Today’s lesson begins in Genesis 18:16 as Abraham escorts his three guests on their way. The Lord wants to teach Abraham a lesson on “the wages of sin” as He prepares to deal with the sin of Sodom. God doesn’t want to hide the judgment He is about to mete out because it is important for Abraham to understand both the importance of righteousness and the severity of sin. God wants Abraham to know that He will deal personally and finally with sin when it is time for judgment.

**God’s Judgment** – When God says, “I will go down to see…” He is saying the same thing that He said in Eden and at the tower of Babel. He comes down, *not* because He doesn’t already know what is going on, but to *bear witness* to the wrongdoing of men and to *establish their guilt* beyond doubt. **God’s judgments are perfect, and they are made with every fact in view.** He is infinitely wise, and He never judges wrongly.

**Abraham’s Plea** – When Abraham hears about the coming judgment on Sodom and sees the two angels depart to carry it out, he is concerned and begins to plead with God. He is afraid that “the righteous will be swept away with the wicked.” God assures him that not only will He not do that, but He will even spare the wicked in the city if 50 righteous men are found in it. And then Abraham makes His repeated pleas for 45, 40, 30, 20, and finally 10 righteous men. Each time God agrees to what he asks. Note that Abraham is not bargaining with God. God knows exactly how many righteous people are in Sodom, and He is allowing Abraham to learn a valuable lesson on interceding for others. He will also learn a lesson on the severity of sin and the faithfulness of God to eradicate it.

**Lot in Sodom** – At the beginning of Genesis 19 we find Lot “sitting at Sodom’s gate.” Recall that he had started out by merely setting up his tent near Sodom (Genesis 13:12), but at some point he had moved inside the city (Genesis 14:12). By the time we reach chapter nineteen, he is sitting at the gates of Sodom, which implies that he was some kind of *city leader*. In other words, he doesn’t just live there, he is helping run the place! When the two angels initially refuse his invitation to stay at his home for the night and say that they will spend the night in the town square, they are forcing him to show that he knows just how dangerous it would be for them to spend the night there. When he “strongly urges” them to stay at his house, he is revealing that he knows exactly how evil the people of the town are and how they will treat any strangers they come across. And when Moses records this event and emphasizes how ALL the men of the town surrounded Lot’s house, he is establishing the guilt of the entire city.

**Men of Sodom** – When Lot offers his two virgin daughters in place of his two visitors, he reveals that women are valued for only three things in this culture: their beauty, their virginity prior to marriage, and their ability to produce children—especially sons. He thinks he is playing a trump card by offering them up. But the men quickly drop the “bonds of brotherhood” with Lot when he calls them on their wicked intent. Instead they refer to him as a “sojourner” (a temporary resident) and threaten him with harm. These men are so set on doing evil that even when the angels blind them, they wear themselves out groping for the door to Lot’s house!

**God’s Faithfulness and Lot’s Frailty** – At daybreak the angels strongly urged Lot to take his family and leave Sodom…but he hesitated. So the angels literally grab Lot and his wife and daughters by the hand and drag them outside the city. In this action they are revealing the faithfulness of God to keep His word to Abraham. Lot is being spared because of his relationship with his uncle. The angels tell him to run for the hills, but he pleads to be allowed to stay in the town of Zoar instead. He is still drawn to city life, despite its evil.

**Lot’s Wife** – As judgment is being rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot’s wife looks back and “became a pillar of salt”. Her backward look indicates that her heart is still back there. There is something back in Sodom that she is loathe to leave behind. But why does God turn her into salt? We think of salt primarily as a flavoring for food, but in her day and time, salt was used as a preservative. God didn’t want her to go to the next town with Lot and her daughters because she would carry with her a fondness for evil. She wanted to preserve wickedness in her heart, so God turned her into a living preservative, a reminder to everyone who saw that they should not look back when God delivers them from sin. Luke 17:32-33 tells us, “*Remember Lot’s wife.* Whoever seeks to *preserve* his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.”

**Lot’s Daughters** – Once again people’s actions reveal what is in their hearts. When Lot’s daughters decide to sleep with their father in order to become pregnant, they reveal that they have absorbed their culture’s assessment of women. They believed that their only worth lay in their ability to have children. They most likely also thought that they were the only survivors of the awful judgment they have witnessed. In that case they would have no one to marry and thus no way to acquire value by producing children. The fact that they resort to incest to solve this “problem” also indicates that they have absorbed the moral values of their hometown.

**Significance for Moses’ Original Audience** – Moses included this distasteful account in order to give his original hearers an understanding of where some of their enemies—the Moabites and the Ammonites—came from. They resulted from an unholy incestuous union between Lot and his daughters.

**Abraham and Abimelech** – In this encounter we see an example of role reversal. The pagan leader Abimelech acts with more integrity than Abraham. It is Abimelech whom God speaks to and who rises early in the morning to obey what God has told him to do. And Abimelech demonstrates a greater fear of the Lord than Abraham!

**Vindicating Sarah** – When Abimelech returns Sarah to Abraham, he tells her that he is giving her “brother” 1000 pieces of silver as a vindication of her honor. This is extremely important because Sarah is probably already pregnant with Isaac, and there must be no doubt about who the father is.

**A Better Savior** – Abraham was a righteous man, but he was also a flawed man, and we dare not put him on a pedestal and make him almost equal to Christ. He, like all the righteous men before him such as Noah, had character flaws. God used these men to deliver his people, but we await a better Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our hope lies solely in Him. **We can rest, knowing that our deliverance rests not on man’s faithfulness, but on God’s alone.**