

Lessons from Lot and His Wife

Remember Lot's wife. (Luke 17:32)

As early as Genesis 11, the reader of Abraham's story meets Abraham's nephew, Lot. Lot is one of the few individuals from the OT that Jesus himself references by name in Luke 19:28-29. In v. 32, Jesus tells his disciples to "remember Lot's wife." What is that all about? From Genesis 11:27 to chapters 12, 13, 14, and 19, Lot is in and out of Abraham's story. Abraham's brother Haran was Lot's father. A study of Lot's lifestyle is a story about the importance of choices and priorities. Lot was a believer, but his life on this earth did not end well.

In Genesis 13, Lot and Abraham must go their separate ways. Each man has accumulated herds of sheep and goats of sufficient size that "the land could not support both of them dwelling together" (13:6). (These grazing animals need pastures of grass and lots of water.) Abraham defers to his nephew, giving him the choice of land. Abraham said if you choose the left, I will go to the right. The choice is Lot's. In verse 10, we read, "Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan valley was watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt." The CSB says, "Lot chose the entire plain of the valley for himself" (v. 11). The language is intentional and pointed. Lot's choice is for himself and himself alone. Lot settles among the cities of the valley "and moved his tent as far as Sodom" (v. 12). (For those not familiar with Sodom, read the article of Sodom and Gomorrah to grasp the significance of v. 13. "Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against Lord [Yahweh].") Lot set up his tent so that his "front porch" looked over a city of wicked sinners. How can a person remain faithful and righteous when their eyes are always looking at that which isn't?

If you are not paying attention, you might glance right over the move that has taken place in Genesis 14. Lot is now a resident of Sodom (v. 12). He no longer looks at the city from his tent; he lives in the city of sinners. And immediately, this is not good. In a regional war between tribal warriors, Lot is taken captive as a prisoner of war for a brief time. Once alerted, Abraham assembled a band of 318 trained men and orchestrated a very successful rescue of his nephew. Safe and free, we are left wondering what Lot will do now with this new opportunity to choose better. But will he?

Five chapters later, Lot is sitting at the gate of Sodom (19:1). The city gate is a bit like the town hall. Perhaps Lot is part of the city's leadership. At the gate, he greets what he thinks are two visitors. In reality, they are angels. Yahweh is going to destroy all of Sodom, and Abraham has pleaded with God to save the city. Yahweh will not save the city, but He will save Lot on Abraham's behalf. Lot insists these visitors must spend the night at his house. What happens next is nearly inconceivable. The men of the city surround Lot's house. "And they call out to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out that we may know them'." (19:5, ESV). Several other translations remove the ambiguity of "know" with the words "have sex with them." The men are lusting sexually over the new men. Remember Genesis 13:13: "The men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners." Lot begs the men not to act so wickedly. Then Lot shocks us when he offers his two virgin daughters to the mob. Stop and read v. 5-11. It is disturbing beyond comprehension. The mob is relentless. The angels blind the crowd and rescue Lot. They tell Lot that Yahweh sent them to destroy the city.

They tell Lot to gather his sons-in-law, daughters, or anyone he cares about in the city. The sons-in-law think Lot is jesting about a coming judgment of the city. Lot is out of his mind. Sulfur and fire don't naturally come out of the sky and destroy cities. In the morning, Lot lingered when the angels urged him to evacuate. So, they took matters into their own hands and "seized him and his wife and his two daughters." And "as they brought him out," they directed them to "escape for your life. Do not look back" (19:16-17). Not looking back was an act of repudiating the wickedness of Sodom. All four should have been exceptionally thankful that Yahweh was showing them grace that no one else in the city was receiving. Like Noah's family, Lot's family was being saved. Yet Lot's wife's affection for Sodom (the world) was greater than her desire to be saved – she looked back. Jesus said, "Remember Lot's wife." She, too, could have been saved with Lot, but her affection for this world cost her – her life. She became a pillar of salt. God saved Lot physically and eternally (2Pe 2:7). He believed when his wife didn't, but his story did not end well, although it should have! Read Genesis 19:30-38 for one of the more disturbing ends to a person's life in the Bible. Lot, the nephew of Abraham, had it ALL until he didn't.