International Bible Lessons Commentary
Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series
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Genesis 19:1-5 & 15-29
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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, September 1, 2019**, is from **Genesis 19:1-5 & 15-29**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Lessons Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the *International Bible Lesson Forum*.

(Genesis 19:1) The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground.

In Genesis 18, Abraham interceded with the LORD, and the LORD agreed that if He found ten righteous men in Sodom (where Lot, Abraham's nephew and family lived) that He would not destroy the city. In Genesis 14, we learn that Abraham had rescued Lot, the king of Sodom, the other kings of the plain, their people, and their possessions after King Chedorlaomer had captured them and carried them off. Perhaps that is one reason the king of Sodom tolerated Lot living among them. Perhaps because of Lot's relationship with Abraham, Lot was recognized as a responsible leader in the city, for it appears only Lot presided at the city gate to welcome, protect, and perhaps warn visitors away from Sodom. These angels came in the evening, so Lot did the best he could to protect them and show them hospitality. Lot bowed before the two angels to show respect, and perhaps

saw from their appearance that they were men with pure hearts. Initially, Lot may not have known they were angels; for we read in Hebrews 13:2, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." In 2 Peter 2:6-9, Peter made Lot an example to encourage us: "And if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction and made them an example of what is coming to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the lawless (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by their lawless deeds that he saw and heard), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment."

(Genesis 19:2) He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the square."

To show hospitality, as Abraham had shown them earlier, and to protect them from the evils in Sodom, Lot invited them to stay in his home that evening. He also wanted them to rise early and go on their way rather than have them remain in the city and be subjected to possible abuse. The two angels intended to spend the night in the square, perhaps to see if there were ten righteous people in the city.

(Genesis 19:3) But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

Lot convinced them to stay in his home for the night, where they would soon learn that there were not ten righteous men in Sodom. In haste, Lot prepared unleavened bread for them to eat (it would have taken time for leaven to raise the dough into a loaf for baking), as would later be done in Egypt when the Hebrews would leave in haste and the LORD would institute the Passover celebration. Lot showed them the same type of hospitality that Abraham had shown them earlier (see Genesis 18).

(Genesis 19:4) But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house;

Before the angels retired for the night, all the men, young and old, surrounded the house. We are reminded of the LORD's description of all the people in Noah's day. In Genesis 6:5, we read, "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was *only evil continually*." All the people in Sodom had been given the opportunity to learn about and worship the LORD. They knew the LORD had been with Abraham when he rescued them along with Lot and his family from King Chedorlaomer. The king of Sodom, at least, had the opportunity to have learned about the LORD from Melchizedek king of Salem, who was priest of God Most High. And certainly, Lot was a witness to them regarding the LORD and righteousness. But just as all the people had turned from Noah, a preacher of righteousness, to remain in unrighteousness, so the people in Sodom preferred sinfulness to godliness. Paul explained this phenomenon in Romans 1:18-32, which I encourage you to read and ponder in the light many peoples' behavior today.

(Genesis 19:5) and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them."

These men illustrate the truth of John 3:19, "And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." They came by night to Lot's home because their deeds were evil, and they intended to do evil. The depths of degeneracy will manifest itself in people who do evil deeds in the light and even parade and promote their evil in the streets of a city. Thus, the men of Sodom were not as evil as they could have become from continuing to live sinful, unrepentant lives. Their evil deeds progressed to the point of violence—all trying to hide their evil deeds from the light of day.

(Genesis 19:15) When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Get up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or else you will be consumed in the punishment of the

city."

As Lot tried to protect the angels, now the angels do all they wisely can to protect Lot and his family. Since the LORD determined to destroy the city because of its wickedness, wickedness that if left unchecked would spread to other cities and people, the angels urged Lot to leave Sodom. The LORD would not destroy the righteous along with the wicked, as Abraham knew when he interceded for Sodom. Already knowing the LORD well, in Genesis 18:23, Abraham asked the LORD, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" Of course, the LORD would not do that.

(Genesis 19:16) But he lingered; so the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and left him outside the city.

No matter how much the angels urged Lot to leave Sodom, he must have been drawn to the possessions that he would leave behind so he delayed. The angels had to physically force him and his wife and daughters to leave the city. Lot was considered righteous under the circumstances, but he was not wise; thankfully, the LORD was merciful toward him and his family.

(Genesis 19:17) When they had brought them outside, they said, "Flee for your life; do not look back or stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, or else you will be consumed."

With a true sense of urgency, the angels encouraged Lot to flee (run) to the hills and not stop or look back. The LORD knew how many cities and how much land He would need to destroy to rid the area of so much wickedness, eventually creating the Dead Sea. Lot and his family needed to be outside that area to be saved. Sodom was so wicked that God would not delay His judgment to placate a disobedient believer. Having physically removed Lot and his family from Sodom, it was now up to them to obey the commands of the angels to be saved. They must flee and not look back.

(Genesis 19:18) And Lot said to them, "Oh, no, my lords;

Though considered righteous under the circumstances (righteous enough to be saved from Sodom's destruction according to Abraham's prayer), Lot

was not known for making the best decisions. Lot was blessed because Abraham had interceded for him. He did not want to do what the angels told him to do, and the angels definitely knew what was best for him and his family.

(Genesis 19:19) your servant has found favor with you, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life; but I cannot flee to the hills, for fear the disaster will overtake me and I die.

After all the angels had done to save Lot and his family the night before when the townspeople had wanted to kill him, Lot still did not trust fully in the LORD to save him. In his prayer, Lot recognized their kindness in saving his life, but he did not have faith that the LORD would save him to the end in this desperate situation. He did not want to flee to the hills for fear the LORD would not be able to save him there and he would die there.

(Genesis 19:20) Look, that city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there—is it not a little one?—and my life will be saved!"

After all Lot had just experienced (as well as in the past) in the evil city of Sodom, he thought he would be safe in another city! Knowing God was going to destroy Sodom, in his deluded thinking Lot wanted to flee to another city nearby. Lot thought life in a small city, with the safety and security a small city must offer, would save him rather than the LORD as our Security being able to save him from destruction in the hills.

(Genesis 19:21) He said to him, "Very well, I grant you this favor too, and will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken.

The LORD had planned to destroy the five cities in the plain: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar. But the LORD also answers prayer! At Lot's request and as a favor to Lot, the LORD chose not to destroy Zoar. Because the LORD is merciful, patient, and slow to anger, despite Lot's foolish request, limited vision, and little faith (and we might not be any better under similar circumstances) the LORD granted Lot's request. The LORD answered the prayer (request) of Lot and saved the people in that

city from destruction. After fleeing to that city and most probably seeing that it was no better than Sodom, Lot fled to the hills with his daughters (see Genesis 19:30). He probably came to realize that Zoar deserved God's judgment too; so that city might not be a safe place to live in for very long.

(Genesis 19:22) Hurry, escape there, for I can do nothing until you arrive there." Therefore the city was called Zoar.

The LORD would not allow the angels to destroy the doomed four cities and the plain until Lot had safely arrived in Zoar. Zoar means "little one."

(Genesis 19:23) The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar.

The LORD did not destroy the four wicked cities and the plain in the dark. The LORD's deeds are not evil. He waited until after the sun had risen and it was light enough for all to witness their destruction. No doubt Lot explained to the residents of Zoar why the LORD had destroyed their sister cities. Perhaps after seeing the instantaneous and total destruction of four cities at once, some in Zoar repented and began to trust in the God of Abraham and Lot. The LORD intended the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah to serve as a warning to wicked people for centuries to come. For example, in Isaiah 13:19, the prophet promised, "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pride of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them." In Matthew 11:23, 24, Jesus warned, "And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades. For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for you." And in Jude 1:7, we read this stern warning, "Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire."

(Genesis 19:24) Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven;

The Jordan River had made the plain fertile and the four cities rich; the sulfur and fire turned the area into the Dead Sea.

(Genesis 19:25) and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

To punish the wicked and deter others from evil deeds if possible, as deserved judgment the LORD destroyed everything.

(Genesis 19:26) But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

Lot's wife did not keep up with him. When the angels dropped their hands, perhaps Lot did not take her hand, or perhaps she refused to let him lead her as the angels had forcibly done. We do not know why Lot's wife looked back, but she disobeyed the angels. Did she want to see if the LORD would really destroy Sodom? Did she want to see the destruction? Was her heart longing for the home she was leaving? We do not know how long she looked back. Maybe she looked back for so long that when the instantaneous destruction fell on the cities, she was unable to flee. The angels had said they could not do anything until Lot had arrived at Zoar; so, she had looked back at least long enough for her husband to safely reach Zoar.

(Genesis 19:27) Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD;

Early the next morning, Abraham saw that the LORD had done what He had promised. He learned that there were not ten righteous people living in Sodom. He knew that Lot was safe, because he knew that the LORD would not destroy the righteous with the wicked.

(Genesis 19:28) and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the Plain and saw the smoke of the land going up like the smoke of a furnace.

Abraham looked and saw the example that Sodom and Gomorrah had become. Their devastation was total.

(Genesis 19:29) So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain, God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had settled.

The Bible emphasizes that God does not and will not forget to keep His word, His promises. God saved Lot "out of the midst of the overthrow," and in the fullness of time God sent His Son to save all who would believe in Him from the judgment that those who persist in wickedness will suffer.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why do you think Lot invited these two strangers into his home for the night?

2. How many men in the city surrounded Lot's house and what were their ages? How many righteous men stayed behind?

3. Read John 3:19. Why do you think the men came to Lot's house after dark? Why do you think some people parade their evil deeds in the light of day?

4. What did Lot need to do to be saved?

5. Why did the angels seize Lot and his family and take them outside of the city?

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