

February 19, 2006

Lesson 8: "Living Righteously in a Wicked World"

Are You:

- Keeping Your Covenants?
- Paying a Full Tithe?
- Having Family Scripture Study?
- Being a Good Example to Others?

Next Week

Lesson 9:

"God Will Provide Himself a Lamb"

Abraham 1
Genesis 15-17
Genesis 21-22

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Questions to Ponder

- What do we learn from the fact that the Lord would spare the cities if righteous people could be found in them?
- What things might we do that are the spiritual equivalent of pitching our tents toward Sodom?
- What are ways in which we might be "looking back," like Lot's wife?



Elder Quentin L. Quinn points out:

Sodom and Gomorrah have actual and symbolic significance representing wickedness in the world. The Lord appeared to Abraham and said, speaking of those who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah, "Their sin is very grievous" (Gen. 18:20). Their sinfulness was so great, and those who were righteous so few, that God destroyed these two cities of the plain. The great prophet of our own day, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has stated: "All of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah haunt our society. Our young people have never faced a greater challenge. We have never seen more clearly the lecherous face of evil." Separating evil from our lives has become even more essential since our homes are wired to bring much of what the Lord has condemned into our own living rooms if we are not vigilant.

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

Elder Theodore M. Burton said:

Sodom and Gomorrah and later Jerusalem were destroyed as a result of pride, selfishness, and the haughtiness of otherwise good people who refused to unite in the cause of righteousness. Our prideful, arrogant world, as we know it, will be destroyed by fire. Rebellions, dissensions, and contentions will continue because of the hardness of the hearts of those who refuse to listen to the pleadings of prophets sent by the Lord to warn them of what is to come. I therefore ask Church members to stand firm; to live in the world but not become part of it. (Ensign, March 1971, 26)

Sources worth investigating further:

- Elder Carlos E. Asay, "Salt of the Earth: Savior of Men and Saviors of Men," *Ensign*, May 1980, 42.
- Bruce Feiler. *Walking the Bible: A Journey by Land Through the Five Books of Moses*. NY: HarperPerennial, 2005.
- President Thomas S. Monson, "Pornography, the Deadly Carrier," *Ensign*, July 2001, 2.
- Robert J. Schneider, "Sodom and Gomorrah: What is This Story About?" Jan. 2003. <http://newark.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/sodomg.html>

Abraham's Hospitality vs. Lot's Hospitality vs. the Sodomites' Hospitality

In Genesis 18, we read that when the Lord's messengers (referred to sometimes as the holy men, sometimes as angels) came to Abraham's tent, Abraham rushed around to make sure they had the finest bread, his most tender calf, and butter and milk and that they were treated warmly and with great respect.

When the messengers went to visit Lot, however, Lot welcomed the angels into his house and fed them unleavened bread. Lot urged them strongly to stay in his house overnight, because he knew if they didn't, they might be harmed or be subjected to the typical depravity that citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah usually displayed. Indeed, as soon as the messengers were inside Lot's house, the men of Sodom started yelling at Lot to send them outside so they could rape them if they felt like it, the absolute inverse of any kind of hospitality and ultimate disrespect, not to mention brutality, especially for God's messengers. Desperately and futilely, Lot bargains with them to take his daughters hostage instead, as long as his visitors remain unharmed.

Lot sees finally that the people in the town are totally evil, although he probably already knew it, and warns his sons to take their wives/his daughters out of the town, but they don't heed his advice. These chapters show the evil, lascivious nature of the townspeople, but especially their horrible treatment of outsiders, even those who are permanent residents. Lot's experience should make us think about whom we have around us, where we live, whether we are living in a place and with those who treat others respectfully and appropriately, and motivate us to make changes if needed so our surroundings and friends are the kind **where angels would be welcome**. —W.W.A.