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Genesis 19 - 20



Genesis - Steve Gregg

In Genesis 19-20, we see the story of Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction, highlighting the importance of hospitality and the judgment of wickedness in God's eyes. Lot's compromises and choices led to the loss of his family members and the moral corruption of his daughters. We also see Abraham make a mistake similar to one made in chapter 12 as he and Sarah are taken by Abimelech, cautioning against making uncharitable judgments about heathen people and reminding us that not every unbeliever is totally depraved. The birth of Isaac marks a new focus for the narrative in Genesis.

Transcript

Genesis 19-20 Genesis 19-20 So Abraham said, well, what if there's 50 righteous there? Will you destroy the city in spite of those 50 righteous? And of course, Abraham's concern was for his own nephew who lived there with his family. Now, God couldn't possibly, I mean, Abraham couldn't possibly have thought there were 50 righteous in the city. But he was a bargainer.

He was the first Jewish man and he knew how to bargain. And he started at a high number to see, to test God's attitudes about this. And when God easily agreed, he said, well, how about 45? And he said, how about 40? How about 30? How about 20? And how about 10? And God, in every case, agreed that if he found that many righteous people in the city, that he would gladly spare the city.

And so, Abraham went back to his tent, really not knowing whether Sodom would be spared or not. He knew that Lot was a righteous man, but he didn't know whether Lot would have enough friends who were righteous in the city to make up a total of 10. Lot's own family must have equaled at least six because he had himself and his wife and he had at least four daughters.

I say at least because there were two virgin daughters and there were at least two who were married. And we don't know how many. There might have been more married daughters because he had sons-in-law, plural.

But Abraham probably went home not entirely sure if he'd won the rescue of Sodom

through his prayers or not. And it says, Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.

And he said, Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise early and go on your way. Now, again, this is sort of what Abraham had said when he saw them.

And the indication is that he didn't know that they were visitors from God to him. He thought they were just travelers on their way. He says, You'll need a place to spend the night.

You can refresh us, then you can continue on your journey. And remember, it says in Hebrews chapter 13 that some have entertained angels inadvertently or unwittingly. I'm sure that Lot is one of those people that the writer of Hebrews has in mind.

I don't think that he knew at this point that he had angels that he was greeting because angels appeared as men. And so they actually initially turned down his hospitality. They said, No, but we will spend the night in the open square.

But he insisted strongly. So they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread and they ate.

So far, that's pretty much the same thing that Abraham had done. Only Abraham had put out a bigger feast. Now, before they laid down and these angels apparently had not even announced their mission, they'd eaten there.

They'd been hanging out for the evening. It was now near bedtime and they hadn't even told Lot yet who they were or what they were there for. But they were there to investigate the condition, the moral condition of Sodom.

And they got a demonstration that would tell them exactly what they needed to know. Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them.

And others that we can rape them. So Sodom was made up of very high density, obviously, of homosexual men or at least bisexual men who they didn't like for a stranger to come and leave the city without having been used. So Lot went out to them through the doorway and shut the door behind him and said, Please, my brethren, do not so wickedly.

See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man. Please let me bring them out to you that you may do to them as you wish. Only do nothing to these men since this is

the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof.

Now, this suggestion of Lot is probably the most offensive thing about Lot that we find in his story of many things. I mean, Lot is not really a shining character in the Bible. He's a bit selfish early on when he chooses the better land and leaves his uncle the worst land.

And we find that Lot originally pitched his tent towards Sodom. But now he has moved into Sodom. He's now got a house in Sodom.

He's become integrated, not entirely because he doesn't share the degree of depravity that the town in general has. But you can tell that he's not entirely, you know, thinking right. He offers his daughters instead of his guests.

Now, this would be something a little more likely to happen in that culture than in ours, certainly. For two reasons. One is because the high view of hospitality that they had.

You bring them in your house, you're promising to guard them with your life. And the other thing is, of course, that women were not as highly valued in that society as men. And therefore, the girls, I'm sure that Lot didn't, you know, wish to see his daughters raped.

But it choice between that and turning over his guests with the customs of hospitality and the low view of that was placed on women in those societies. He just made a really bad suggestion. And fortunately, the men didn't want the daughters because if they had been satisfied with that, that might have happened.

But the men didn't want that. They said, stand back. Then they said, this one came into sojourn and he keeps acting as a judge.

Now we will deal worse with you than with them. So they pressed hard against the man a lot and came near to break down the door. But the men reached out their hands as the angels inside the house reached out their hands, pulled Lot into the house with them and shut the door.

And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary of trying to find the door. Now, it's clear that these angels didn't need any protection from Lot. Lot needed protection from them.

And he was apparently he was about to be raped. They said, we'll do worse to you than we are going to do to them. Interesting, they say worse.

They intended to do evil. They recognized that what they were doing was not good. Now, what they intended to do to the two guests was not good.

And what they were going to do to Lot was worse yet. Now, notice they say of Lot, this man first came into sojourn among us. He was a visitor at first, and now he keeps acting

like a judge of us.

Now, this may be a reference to the fact that he actually had assumed the role in Sodom as a judge. And they were showing their resentment because he was not corrupt as they were. We find in chapter 19, verse 1, that Lot, when the angels arrived, was seen sitting at the gate of Sodom.

Now, you'll find throughout the Old Testament when men are sitting at the gate of the city, they usually are judges. That's where people would bring their cases for deliberation from the magistrates. And the judges would sit at the gate of the city.

So, it says in Proverbs 31 about the virtuous woman, it says her husband sits at the gate of the city among the elders. And Absalom, when he wanted to take over the kingdom from his father David, he sat at the gate of the city. And when people came with complaints, he would act as a judge for them and judge in a way that he knew they would appreciate so that they'd take his side.

And so, many times we find reference to those at the gate of the city are judges. And here's Lot at the gate of the city. So, he not only had moved into Sodom, but he appears to have taken a position of responsibility.

And so, when they say he keeps acting as a judge, there's a sense in which that was probably literally true. But in this case, they were thinking more in the sense that we hear the term judge today when unbelievers are complaining about Christian standards. And they say, well, you're not supposed to judge.

In other words, criticism, criticism of someone's behavior. After all, Lot had said to them, do not do so wickedly. And so, he had judged what they wanted to do as a wicked act.

And they resented the fact that he was calling them wicked and said, who are you to judge us? You're just a visitor here. And so, they were angry at Lot for that. And they attacked him, pressing him against the door so hard the door almost broke.

And in those days, they didn't have hollow doors made of balsa wood like we have today. They were strong doors, especially in a town like Sodom, you know, they have strong doors. But the men inside managed to rescue Lot and to rescue themselves and struck them in blind.

Now, I don't know if this is temporary blindness. I don't know if they recovered their sight, but they didn't live much longer than this. They were probably blind for the rest of their lives, which was only a few more hours, I think.

And they became not only blind, but apparently confused because they were at the door. And when they were struck blind, they couldn't find the door. So, the angels totally defused the danger.

Then the men said to Lot, that is the angels, have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, take them out of this place. For we will destroy this place because of the outcry against them has grown great before the face of Yahweh. And Yahweh has sent us to destroy it.

It's interesting, it says that Yahweh has sent us to destroy it. That means that when they were on their way, when they departed from Abraham and Lot, and went off, they already were on a mission. They've been sent there to destroy it.

Of course, God would have changed the mission if there had been ten righteous there after Abraham had prayed in the way he had. So, Lot hears for the first time that the city is doomed. And Lot went and spoke to his sons-in-law who had married his daughters.

Now, he had two virgin daughters, he's mentioned. Now, he has at least two, because it's plural, could be more, married daughters. And he said, get up, get out of this place for the Lord will destroy this city.

But to his sons-in-law, he seemed to be joking. He couldn't get them to take him seriously. So, it would appear that both the sons-in-law and their wives, his daughters, remained in Sodom.

And when the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city. And while he lingered, the men 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. So, Lot was not eager to leave.

Perhaps he was not 100% sure this was really true. Or maybe he wanted to linger and gather up more things to take with him. I mean, if you heard that there was a tsunami coming to the town you're living in, or a hurricane, and you're going to have to evacuate, you quickly try to think of things you'd want to take that you wouldn't want to lose, wouldn't want to be destroyed.

I'm sure he and his wife were doing that. And the angels said, Listen, you're taking much too long. And there were two angels, they had four hands.

Fortunately, there weren't any more people in the family to drag out. They grabbed Lot, his wife, and his two daughters, and that took all their hands, and they took them out of the city. And interestingly, it says, The Lord being merciful to him.

That is, God yanked him out of the city because God was merciful, even though Lot was not eager to leave the city. Sometimes God moves you because he's merciful, even though you're moved to a place that you were reluctant to go yourself. I remember when I was 16, I'd been raised in this one house almost all my life, in Covina, California, 1970.

I'd been there from kindergarten through my 11th grade. I was actually in my junior year of high school in the middle of it, and my dad, his job transferred him to Orange County, California, which was about 40 miles away. And my dad didn't like commuting, and so he said, We're going to move.

Now, we hadn't moved for whatever it was, 11 years or something, 12 years. And all my friends, all my relationships, the church I was going to, my school, everything was there in Covina, and I did not want to move to Orange County. And I remember trying to find any way I could.

I was halfway through my junior year. I thought, Well, maybe I could just stay here with one of my friends' families until I graduate or something. My parents were willing to consider it, but we didn't really find a good option.

And so, against my wishes, I was dragged. I would now say, By God, where I didn't want to go, that's Orange County. And the reason I say it was by God is because it was the best thing that ever happened to me, because that happened to be, well, the day I arrived at Orange High School.

I did not yet have my P.E. clothes, so I was not suited up at P.E. And there was another guy who was new there who also was not suited up because he was new. And so we became acquainted with each other, and he was going to Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, and he invited me to go there. I had never heard of it.

That was 1970, the very beginning of the Jesus Movement. And so he took me there, and my life was totally changed forever. And yet I thought often how little I wanted to go.

And if I had found some way to stay in Covina, who knows when or if I would have discovered the Jesus Movement. I think the Jesus Movement eventually filtered over to where I was. It filtered all over the place.

But getting into it when I did and where I did was definitely, I can't think of anything better that's ever happened in my whole life. And yet I think of how reluctant I was to go where that was going to be. But God was merciful, and just like Lot was apparently reluctant to go outside of Sodom, God knew that was going to be the safer place, the better place for him.

And so it mentions that he was kind of dragged against his will or ahead of his wishes, at least, because of God's mercy toward him. And we have to see God's providence in our lives as merciful, often even though the providence of God is counter our plans and our wishes and what we think is going to be good for our happiness or well-being. So, verse 17, It came to pass when they had brought them outside the city, that one of the angels said, Escape for your life.

Do not look behind you, nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest

you be destroyed. Then Lot said to them, Please, no, my lord, this guy is reluctant.

I mean, he should get the idea that I think I better just head. If they say the hills is where it's going to be safe, that's probably where I better get to. But he says, you know, it's kind of hard going that far and climbing mountains has never been my specialty.

I've never been that athletic. Indeed, now your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life. But I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die.

I mean, there's bears and lions and stuff up there. I don't want to go up there. See, now this city over here is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one.

Please, let me escape there. Is it not a little one? And my soul shall live. You know, big cities have a lot of evil.

Little cities can only have a little bit of evil in them, I guess. And so he's saying, maybe this city could be spared because it can't be that evil. It's only a small town.

And the angel said to him, see, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there. Therefore, the name of the city was called Zoar.

And can you imagine what Zoar means? Little. Now, it's interesting because Zoar was apparently one of the cities of the plain that was slated for destruction. There were five cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, and three others that got destroyed.

And apparently this city would have been too, except that because Lot wanted to go there instead of the mountains, God, through His angel, who apparently had power of attorney to speak for God, said, okay, I'm going to spare that city because you're going to go there. So, I mean, God is so accommodating, even to this man, who ought to be grateful just to get out of the city of Sodom, and he should be doing what he's told. But he's got his worries, he's an older man probably, and he doesn't want to climb the mountains.

So, they spared it. Now, that last verse we read, verse 22, hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there, this verse is often quoted in favor of the pre-tribulation rapture. Why? Well, if you look over at Luke chapter 17, Luke chapter 17, in verse 26, Jesus said, And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will also be in the days of the Son of Man.

They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, as it was also in the days of Lot, they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built. But on the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from

heaven and destroyed them all.

Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down and take them away. And likewise, the one who is in the field, let him not turn back.

Remember Lot's wife. Now, when Jesus said, It's going to be like the days of Noah, and it's going to be like the days of Lot. The way that I was taught this early in my life was that the tribulation of the last days is like the flood of Noah, or it's like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

And God, of course, didn't send the flood until he took Enoch out of the world. This is what they say. You see, Noah, you might think Noah would be the church spared through the flood, spared through the judgment.

But the teaching I received was that Enoch, who lived before the flood, was raptured, remember. Enoch was caught up alive. And so they say, well, that's like the rapture of the church, which would be before the tribulation.

And then they say, and Lot being taken out of Sodom would be like us being taken out of the world before the tribulation also. After all, and this verse is quoted from Genesis 19, 22, God said that he cannot do anything to Sodom until Lot had arrived safely at the place he has to go. And so they were saying, God can't even send the tribulation until the church is removed to a place of safety.

Now, I don't want to spend too much time on this particular doctrine, but those two arguments are pretty weak. For one thing, Enoch, as a picture of the church, raptured to miss out on the tribulation, doesn't work out very well because he actually was raptured like 300 years before the flood. He wasn't taken out of the world to escape the flood.

He would have died of old age anyway. His son, who died in the year of the flood, died the oldest man in the world. It's not likely that Enoch would have outlived him.

So Enoch was taken out of the world hundreds of years before the flood, and there's no evidence in Scripture that the flood is ever supposed to be seen as an emblem of the tribulation period. As a matter of fact, it seems to be an emblem of the second coming of Christ. That's what Jesus said the day that the Son of Man comes back.

So there is a judgment associated with the second coming, and the flood, both in 1 Peter and in 2 Peter, but especially in 2 Peter 3, is likened to that judgment, but not to a future tribulation period. Likewise, the association with the destruction of Sodom with a seven-year tribulation seems very unlikely, since it was not a protracted judgment. Sodom was destroyed in a single day.

It wasn't something that stretched out over years, so it doesn't make a very good picture

of a seven-year tribulation. It makes a very good picture of the second coming, of which it says in 2 Thessalonians 1.8, it says that Jesus will come with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's 2 Thessalonians 1.8. So what happened to Sodom is a good picture of the second coming of Christ, but not in any sense is it a picture of some protracted period of tribulation from which Lot, like the church, was delivered.

And Lot was not taken out of the world. He was close enough to the destruction when it happened that his life was able to succumb to it. And so I don't really see there being a valid argument from these particular cases, the flood of Noah and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, as pictures of the tribulation period and Enoch's translation and Lot's escape from Sodom as pictures of the rapture of the church.

These are fairly artificial analogies, it seems to me. Now back to Genesis 19.23. The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. So apparently they traveled at night.

And Yahweh rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah from the Lord out of the heavens. Now brimstone is an old word for sulfur. And in the southern region of the Dead Sea, which is where Sodom and Gomorrah are believed to have been, there's a lot of sulfur deposits and a lot of salt deposits too, because it's the salt sea.

And it's not entirely clear how this happened, I mean, why sulfur would come out of heaven. Some people think that really what happened was that God sent an electrical storm and that lightning fire from heaven came down and exploded some of the elements there, the sulfur and the salt were flying everywhere. And the city was just incinerated that way.

In other words, there might have been already sulfur in the area as there is now. And that God simply lit the match. God sent the fire to ignite it.

And then you had this huge explosion. But it says He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But Lot's wife looked back behind him and she became a pillar of salt.

Now, remember, Jesus said, Remember Lot's wife, and He said this in connection of fleeing from the wrath. And there's a sense in which every Christian in coming to Christ is fleeing from the wrath to come. Remember John the Baptist, when the Pharisees came to his baptism, he said, Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? There is a wrath to come.

I believe the wrath that John was referring to was what happened to Jerusalem in AD 70. But there's a judgment always awaiting mankind. Everyone will be judged on the Judgment Day.

And we do flee from that wrath when we leave behind our old life and run to God. Now,

this family was running from their old life, which they had become quite established and apparently comfortable in. When they had traveled with Abram, they'd lived in tents.

And when they separated from Abram, they lived in tents. But now they lived in a house. That's got to be nicer.

You know, probably had indoor plumbing. No, not really. They probably didn't have indoor plumbing.

Probably had hot and cold running cockroaches and rats. But it was still third world, you know, but it was a house nonetheless. And they had their family there.

They had children there who didn't leave with them. Daughters, sons-in-law, maybe grandchildren, we don't know. Friends.

And, you know, when you leave something like that, you kind of miss it. And I think Lot's wife, her problem was that she lingered behind to watch and, you know, maybe longing to live back there. What's going to happen to my children back there? What's happening to, you know, to my home? And, you know, I didn't clean it before I left, you know.

You know, I wonder, I hope when God shows up it won't be a dirty, you know, sink in there. But she's looking back, thinking about her home and her past life and her kids. And, in fact, when it says she looked back, it's very possible that the problem was that she stopped running way too soon and stood and watched to see what would happen and found herself much too close when the devastation came.

When God said, don't look back, He might not have been, you know, making that like a test. Like, if you look back, I'm going to judge you. But rather, just keep going that way.

Don't stop. Put as much distance as you can because this is going to be a big explosion here. And you don't stop, don't look back.

Just go straight ahead and get as far away as you can. And yet she didn't. And she may, in fact, have just lingered too close to the city.

If there's all this flying molten sulfur and salt and so forth, she may have become encased in it. She would then become a pillar of salt. I don't know that we're supposed to believe that the elements of her body supernaturally turned to salt as a judgment from God.

I mean, God could do that, of course. Like, naughty, naughty, lots of life, you did the wrong thing, so I'm going to turn you into a pillar of salt. I don't know that God would work that kind of a miracle for that kind of an infraction.

I think it's more likely that her turning into a pillar of salt was more of a natural result of her not doing what God warned her to do. She looked back. She probably was curious,

wanted to see what was going to happen to her old hometown.

And when all that, when all those minerals began to fly, they were molten like lava, probably, and she became encased in salt. She became, as it were, a pillar of salt. And so Jesus says, remember her.

You know, when God calls you to flee from your old life, don't be too fond of it. Don't be looking back at it too much with longing eyes. It's not worth it.

It may catch up with you. As in the scenario I just suggested, we could say the destruction of Sodom caught up with her because she hadn't put enough distance. She hadn't continued to keep her back to it.

And that was what happened to her. And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord. Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the plain, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land, which went up like the smoke of a furnace.

So that had to discourage him. He probably hadn't slept much that night, wondering if maybe there were going to be ten, maybe there should be spared. He goes out in the morning and looks at the smoke coming.

He says, I guess there weren't ten. But he doesn't know what happened to Lot. For all he knows, Lot is toast.

And yet God did something merciful. He couldn't find ten. But the few he found, he rescued.

And Abraham hadn't even thought to ask for that. God just does that because that's the way God is. God could not destroy Sodom until Lot and his family had reached a safer place.

At least until Lot had. And it came to pass when God destroyed the cities of the plain that God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt. Notice it doesn't say God remembered Lot and saved him.

He remembered Abraham and saved Lot. Lot was saved because of his connection to Abraham, not because of his intrinsic merits. Even as we're saved by our connection with Jesus.

You know, God doesn't really so much owe it to us to forgive us our sins, but he owes it to Jesus. Because Jesus, what Jesus did. You know in 1 John 1, 9, where it says, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

It always seems like it should be he is faithful and merciful to forgive us our sins. It

seems like forgiving our sins is not justice, that's mercy. But it is justice.

If Jesus has paid for our sins to be forgiven, then it would be unjust for God to deny that to Jesus who made the payment. God doesn't owe us anything except judgment. But because of our connection to Jesus, God remembers Jesus.

He remembers what Christ deserves, what Christ has purchased. And therefore he saves us just like he saved Lot because of his friendship with Abraham. Then Lot went up out of Zoar, so apparently he wasn't even happy there.

And he dwelt in the mountains, the very place the angels had first told him to go. He had negotiated for, you know, this city, but apparently when he got there he thought, well, it's small, but I still don't feel safe here. He was afraid to dwell in Zoar, it says, and he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave.

What a reversal. He was a wealthy, nomadic shepherd with his father Abraham, but allowed for conflicts to arise, so he parted from Abraham and then compromised more and went into Sodom. He even became influential in Sodom.

You know, as many people have observed, you can take your family into Sodom, but you can't necessarily get them out again. Some people, you know, they're careless about the way they raise their kids and then they're unhappy with the way they turned out. They allow their kids to associate with the wrong kind of people, go to public school, you know, watch the wrong kind of things, and then they kind of bring their kids into the world in the worldly environment, and then they lose them there.

And Lot should have known before he ever moved into Sodom, hey, my daughters, they're going to grow up around these people in Sodom? I don't think so. That's not what I'm going to have happening with my kids. But he didn't think that way.

He thought, well, Sodom is a more comfortable place than out here in this tent, and there's business there, there's prestige there, I can rise in the society there, I can be a judge, I can be a magistrate. And he's not thinking about his kids, he's not thinking about his family, and it's obvious that he didn't get his family out of Sodom. He lost at least as many daughters in Sodom as he got out.

He lost his wife to Sodom, and then even the two daughters that he got out of Sodom, he never quite got Sodom out of them. And so it should be a warning about, you know, the way we bring our children up and the choices we make for their environment, because we might be able to get them into a situation that we think we can get them out of later, but they find they have their, they put down their roots there. And in this case, his daughters had put down their moral roots in Sodom, even though they escaped with their lives, because verse 31 says, Now the firstborn said to the younger, Our father is old, and there is no man on the earth to come into us as is the custom of all the earth.

Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him that we may preserve the lineage of our father. So they made their father drink wine that night, and the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, Indeed, I lay with my father last night.

Let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in and lie with him that we may preserve the lineage of our father. Then they made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. At least that's what he reported.

Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day.

And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ami, and he is the father of the people of Ammon to this day. Now the Moabites and the Ammonites were obviously related to each other in this way, and they became later adversaries of Israel throughout much of their history. And they arose in this ignominious manner.

Moses, writing at a time when Israel has come out of Egypt, I mean that's the time frame of Moses actually putting the pen to the parchment and writing this down. He's living at a time where the Moabites and the Ammonites are going to be adversaries to them. And he includes this story telling where those nations came from.

They came from this really unideal situation. A family has escaped from judgment barely. They're living in a cave like Neanderthals.

And the two daughters, they think that their dad's the last living man. They say, you know, there's no man on earth to come into us as is the custom. Now they may be being literal or they may be using hyperbole.

It may be they're just saying up here in the mountains there's no one around. So there's no one on the whole earth. And so they say, well, we'll never have children then.

And our father will never have offspring unless we come to the rescue here. And so they do this thing. Now I'm not sure if they were really motivated so much by concern for their father's lineage.

If so, then in a sense they were kind of trying to honor their father. Or if they were more concerned that they would be deprived of ever having children, which was something, you know, every woman wanted to have children. And if they thought their dad was the last man around, then maybe it was more selfish that they wanted children, but convinced themselves they were doing it for their father's sake to preserve his lineage.

In any case, they knew that he wouldn't approve. They had to get him drunk because he

wouldn't do this if he knew what he was doing. So, I mean, that's very clear.

They knew that they were doing something contrary to what Lot would approve of if he was sober. So they had to get him drunk. And it's a bizarre thing.

Now they might have thought, as they heard of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, they might have thought the whole world has been incinerated. We're the only survivors. I mean, they couldn't see that far in those days.

They couldn't get a newspaper to turn on the news to see, you know, how the rest of the world was doing. The whole world they saw was burned to a crisp. And they may literally have thought, our dad's the last man on earth.

If we're going to have children, he's going to have to be the one. And he's old, so we better not waste any time. But it was not a morally good plan, obviously, I mean, incestuous.

Although we have to remember that incest had not yet been forbidden by the law. And Abraham himself was married to his half-sister, something that would have been unlawful in the days of Moses. But lots of people apparently were married to much closer relatives than they would be allowed to be now.

All of Adam and Eve's children married their brothers and sisters. I don't know if in that society, marrying your brother or sister was any more perverted or any less perverted than marrying your own father or daughters. But, I mean, we're talking about very ancient times here.

When we read these old stories, we naturally bring our own sensitivities, which are the result of 2,000 years of Christian influence in our world, in our civilization. And we think like Christians, as, of course, we should. But we have to remember these people are primitive peoples.

They had no Bible of any kind. They didn't even have one book of the Bible. No one knew who God was except for Abram and the people that heard about it from him, because God had appeared to him, but not to anyone else.

So, really, these people are just kind of, the whole world is just kind of flying by the feet of their pants morally. They don't really know anything like we do. And the girls, of course, they knew they were doing something their father wouldn't approve of, or else they wouldn't have felt they had to get him drunk.

But at the same time, they may not have seen this as a wicked deed. But then their sense of what's wicked and what's not, no doubt, was greatly compromised by having spent some of their youth in Sodom, maybe their entire youth. And the culture there had certainly not been a good influence on them, as we can see.

But the story is told in order that we could see where the Moabites and the Ammonites came from. Now, chapter 20, we find Abram making a mistake similar to one he made in chapter 12. It says, Then Abram journeyed from there to the south and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur.

And he sojourned in Gerar. Now, Gerar is one of the five Philistine cities along the coastal plain of Palestine. The Philistines were not Canaanites, but they lived in Canaanite land, or at least what would be Canaanite land if they hadn't gotten there.

The Philistines in very ancient times, actually long before Abram's time, had sailed from Crete. They were called in those days the Kapturim, and they sailed from Crete to a number of places. They were seafaring people.

And a number of them had settled in five locations along the Mediterranean coast in Palestine and had established five cities there. These were city-states. Each one had a king.

This continued to be true well into David's day. David also went to Gerar when he was fleeing from Saul. And this was a thousand years after Abraham's time.

So the Philistines were a powerful and a prominent and a very early presence there in the promised land. And they were not really eliminated as a problem to Israel until David's day. David was the first to finally get rid of them.

Samson had had his effect on them, but David finally subjugated them after the Philistines had killed Saul. And now, at this point, of course, Abram doesn't have any good or bad relations with the Philistines. He's just a stranger.

No one in that land is a friend of his particularly, except his friends where he's camping out under their oak trees or turban trees. But he, for whatever reason, and we're not told why, he moved toward Gerar. Now remember, Sarah would be pregnant by now.

Unless this was immediately after God announced it, and she had not yet gotten pregnant, but she's going to have a baby within a year from the announcement made in chapter 18. So this story happened, it would appear, if it's in its correct chronological place, during that year between the announcement and the birth of Isaac. And so he journeyed from there, he sojourned in Gerar.

Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, she is my sister. And Abimelech, king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah. Now this is just the same scene all over again that you had, what was it, 25 years ago when he first came into the land in chapter 12.

Making the same mistake. It was an embarrassment then when Pharaoh discovered that he'd been deceived by Abraham. This even seems to be more of an embarrassment.

We have more description of the embarrassment Abraham faced in this case because he lied and endangered his wife. And so Abimelech took Sarah. Now again, when a woman was taken into a king's harem, she didn't immediately go into his bedroom.

She had to be prepared. The king was too superior to ordinary people to just have a common peasant woman or any woman come to his bed. She had to go through a transitional period.

As I pointed out in the case of Esther, when she was taken into the harem of the king of Persia, it was a full year of special preparation she and the other women had to go through before they would go to be with the king. So although she was taken into Abimelech's house, obviously with the intention of her eventually being a wife to him, she would not immediately be in danger of being sexually violated by him. But that would be something that was, obviously he was expecting to happen eventually.

But Abimelech had not come near her. And he said, Lord... I'm sorry, I missed an important part, verse 3. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, Indeed, you're a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife. And then Abimelech put it together that she must be Abraham's wife because God just says she's a man's wife.

But Abimelech had not come near her. And he said, Lord, will you slay a righteous nation also? Did he not say to me, She is my sister? And she, even she herself said, He is my brother. In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this.

And God said to him in a dream, Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart, for I also withheld you from sinning against me. Therefore, I did not let you touch her. Now, therefore, restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you, and you shall live.

But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours. So, in this narration, we don't really read of Yahweh because this relationship, this communication is between God and a pagan. It says Elohim spoke to him.

And he replied to Elohim Adonai, which is the common term of respect or Lord or Master. It is, of course, Yahweh who's doing this, but it's interesting that the narration, because it's not talking about a relationship between God and Abraham, for example, but with a pagan, it does not use the covenantal name of God in the narration. But, interestingly enough, we find that God, when he said, he said, you're a dead man.

It's important that we note that this kind of language is used in the Bible. Because, of course, Abimelech was not literally dead, but what God is saying is, you know, if you continue on the course you're on, you'll die. You're on the path to death.

You've got another man's wife, and this is going to, it means you're doomed. And,

unless, of course, you change. And the man said, well, I didn't know that this was the case, and God said, I realized that, and that's why I didn't let you touch him.

And, so, the statement, you're a dead man, means that, you know, you're on the path that will inevitably lead to death if you don't get off of it. You need to change course. And I point this out because that term is used in the New Testament, too, and often misunderstood.

For example, Paul says in Ephesians chapter 2, in verse 2, that we were dead in trespasses and sins. And, simply, that means, simply, that if we had not repented, we were on the path that would have inevitably, the consequence would be death. Or, as Paul says in Romans 6, he said, and if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.

When he says our body, he's talking about our physical bodies as opposed to our spirits, he says our bodies are actually dead. That's in Romans 8, 10. If Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.

Now, is my body dead, literally, because of sin? No, my body is not literally dead, but it's on the path, it's going to die, because of sin. It's doomed. It's a doomed body.

It'll be resurrected, but this body's going to die. And it's inevitable because of sin, he says. But the spirit is life.

So, we see Paul using the word dead to mean the same thing we find God using the term to mean here. And in other places, when Mephibosheth, Saul's son, was spared by David and given privilege, Mephibosheth said, I'm a dead dog. Why should you treat me with kindness? And I'm a dead dog, I think what he means is that most kings would destroy the seed of the former king that they replaced.

When there was a coup, whenever one king replaced another king into a different dynasty, they would kill off all the crown princes of the king that was going out so that they might never rise up and challenge them. But here there was one surviving heir of Saul, and that was Mephibosheth, and he was a cripple. And David showed kindness to him.

Actually, he was the son of Jonathan, so he was the grandson of Saul. And Mephibosheth referred to himself as a dead dog, meaning I'm someone who would expect to be killed because I'm part of the previous administration that you replaced and you're showing this kindness to me. It doesn't make sense.

But again, being a dead man, being dead suggests that one is on the path or would seem to be doomed to death. The prodigal son, when he returned to his father, his father said, my son was dead, but he's now alive. Meaning, you know, in that case he might just mean dead to me, our relationship was dead, or something like that.

But it also could mean he would have died had he not come home. Now, God tells Abimelech to take the woman back to her husband. And verse 8 says, So Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants and told all these things in their hearing.

That's interesting they did that because he didn't have to do that. I mean, this would be kind of embarrassing to him that he had taken a man's wife. Of course, it wasn't his fault, but still he's going to have to return her.

For a king to have to do that, it would be kind of eating humble pie. Saying, you know, I shouldn't have taken her. But he didn't do this privately.

He called all his servants and told them the whole matter. And the men were very afraid. And Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, What have you done to us? How have I offended you that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done.

Then Abimelech said to Abraham, What did you have in view that you have done this thing? And Abraham said, Because I thought surely the fear of God is not in this place, and they will kill me on account of my wife. Well, that's interesting because the fear of God clearly was in the place. When God revealed Himself to Abimelech, Abimelech was afraid.

And when Abimelech told it to his servants, they were all afraid. There was fear of God in the place. Abraham misjudged them.

He knew they were heathen, and therefore he said, There's no fear of God in them. And he made an uncharitable misjudgment. And without taking this as too much of an opportunistic opportunity to rag on Calvinism again, which I do from time to time, I don't mean to pick on them specifically, but I often think that that's what Calvinism does.

It says of unbelievers, There's no fear of God in them. And that's not always true because Calvinism says, If you're not born again, you are unutterably wicked. You are a hater of God, an enemy of God.

This is the way that Calvinism portrays it. Every unbeliever, every unregenerate person is totally depraved. And I was raised thinking that, and then I got to know some unbelievers.

I thought, Well, you know, if they're totally depraved, they sure are effective hypocrites because some of them seem like nice folks. Some of them seem like good folks. Some of them don't seem like they're really that monstrous.

They seem like real people. And they seem like they have compassion and there's good things about them. And yet the theology of Calvinism would make me think, No, but don't be deceived.

Inside all that exterior, there's this seething hatred for God bubbling up that influences everything they do, which deserves to go to hell and burn forever, and so forth. And that's something I'm not sure the Bible really teaches that. I don't think it does.

And if it doesn't, then we're making an uncharitable judgment of unbelievers if we just put them all in that category. Abraham made that misjudgment. These people are heathen.

These are Philistines. Certainly they're all wicked. There's no fear of God in this place.

Well, he was wrong about that. They did fear God. They didn't know God, but when they got to know He was there, they were afraid of Him.

And so that kind of misjudgment, I think, could be made by us sometimes of people who aren't Christians just because they're not Christians, we might think the worst of them. That's not appropriate. He says, I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place, and they'll kill me on account of my wife.

But indeed, she is truly my sister. She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife. So, in other words, I didn't really lie.

What I said is technically true. She's my half-sister. And it is technically true.

But, of course, it's not the most important thing that can be said about her. It's a half-truth. Sometimes, when you tell a half-truth, you're often telling the part that's not the most important part.

And in which case, you tell the truth in order to lie. But he could, in his own mind, justify saying she's his sister. That would be true.

However, he said it in order to put her in a position where she could be in danger of being defiled. And this may be even while she's carrying Isaac. Who knows? We don't know if she's pregnant yet.

But imagine if it had come to the point where she actually ended up having to sleep with a bimlick. And wouldn't that confuse the parentage of the baby, of Isaac? You know? If she's not pregnant at this time, and if she is, it makes it even seemingly worse. And it came to pass when God caused me to wander from my father's house that I said to her, this is your kindness which you should do for me.

In every place wherever we go, say of me, he is my brother. Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and female servants and gave them to Abraham. And he restored Sarah, his wife, to him.

And Abimelech said, See, my land is before you. Dwell where it pleases you. Then to Sarah he said, Behold, I have given your brother.

Notice he calls Abraham her brother. I've given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. Indeed, this vindicates you before all who are with us, who are with you, and before all others.

Thus she was reproved, it says. Now, we might wonder why should she be reproved? She was, you know, she was not really, she hadn't really done anything as wrong as Abraham had done. But she had gone ahead and said, Yes, Abraham's my brother.

Remember when he says, Even she said he's my brother. So Abimelech's taking a jab at her, saying, I've given your brother all these things to try to make up for any wrong that's been done here. And by referring to him as her brother, apparently the sarcasm is meant as a bit of a jab to her, and she takes that as a reproof.

So Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maid servants, and they bore children. For the Lord had closed up the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife. So just as in chapter 12, when Pharaoh took Sarah in on similar ruse, God sent plagues on Pharaoh's house.

Here, he closed the wombs of Abimelech's family. Now, how did they know that? There must have been some period of time elapsed here, because you wouldn't know in a week or two whether all the wombs in the household had been made barren. Usually, you'd find that out after a period of maybe months, you'd think.

Because, I mean, just because a woman doesn't get pregnant in a given week or a given month, doesn't tell you anything about whether she's barren or not. So, maybe God had made them barren, but it had not yet become clear, and it would have over time. I don't know.

But in any case, Abraham intercedes. After being humiliated, he probably felt embarrassed about praying after being shown to be a deceiver and so forth, but that's what he did, and God honored his prayer, because Abraham was God's man. So, his intercession worked.

Now, when we come to chapter 21, which we will do after we take a break, we come to the birth of Isaac and some important history begins here. We're going to be getting to the end of the story of Abraham here very shortly, and Isaac is going to be the next focus, though not for long. Because Isaac is passed over rather quickly compared to Abraham and Jacob.

Isaac is the son of Abraham and the father of Jacob, but only one whole chapter is ever devoted to Isaac without it being related to Abraham and Jacob. Isaac, at other times, is always connected with his father or his son in the narrative, and only one chapter in the whole Genesis is just about Isaac. But we have Isaac coming into the picture and some important things to observe about that when we come back from our break.