

Lot Chose All the Plain of Jordan

“And God delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds”—2 Peter 2:7-8

APPROXIMATELY 375 years after the Flood, we see a righteous man in Ur of the Chaldees, endeavouring to remain true to the instructions of his faithful ancestors.

He was a descendant of Shem, who at this time was about 450 years old. Noah had died 17 years before the events that began Genesis 12. We know this man as righteous Abraham.

In his family circle was a young man named Lot, his nephew, who had lost his father and was associated with Abraham.

In Gen. 12:1 the call of Abraham (at that time named "Abram") is recorded, with which Lot would be acquainted and incorporated by association—

"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."

From Ur of the Chaldees this family travelled to Haran up the Euphrates. From there, when Abraham's father Terah had died, they went southwest into Canaan.

Lot with Abraham was called out of the comfortable surroundings of a well-developed civilization, to become a wanderer and a stranger in a land they should after receive as an inheritance.

Together with Abraham, Lot travelled south to Egypt when a famine made existence difficult in Canaan, only to return again to Palestine, when domestic problems arose in Egypt.

Palestine was the land of Promise and there they were commanded to sojourn. Thus we see them called "out of Egypt" to the covenanted land. In the process we see the merciful guidance of an all-wise Creator in the affairs of His children.

It illustrates for all the faithful the Divine control of all events, in order to teach them the lesson of separateness from the world and the necessary correction of their footsteps.

Back in the Promised land we see the flocks of these two patriarchs increase to the point where strife developed between their herdmen, bringing about that illustration of supreme selflessness on the part of Abraham, and a manifestation of the natural desires of Lot—

"There was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle:

"And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we are brethren.

"Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me. If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right. Or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left" (Gen. 13:7-9).

"Is not the whole land before thee?" Abraham would not encourage his nephew to leave the land, not after their recent experiences in Egypt from which they were Divinely delivered. Certainly we know that Abraham would stay as far away from foreign and worldly entanglements as possible. But what of Lot? His decision is recorded in Gen. 13:10-11—

"Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere.

"Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other."

And we read that Lot—

"Dwelt in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom" (v. 12).

Lot—by his own free choice— went OUT of the Land of Promise.

He, by lifting up his eyes and beholding the pleasant things of the present, chose to go from the land of God's choice to a land of death. He chose what he could see, rather than that which is by faith—

"The things which are seen are temporal, the THINGS which are not seen are eternal"

(2 Cor. 4:18).

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THE description of Sodom affords a vision of a beautiful and delightful area, "like the garden of Eden, the garden of the Lord, well watered everywhere"—like the land of Egypt, possibly at the delta of the Nile, the land of Goshen, later occupied by Jacob and his descendants.

The prosperity and beauty of Sodom and its environs was able to satisfy the desires of the natural man very well.

Jerusalem in her days of extreme wickedness is allegorically identified with Sodom and Gomorrah. Of Sodom naturally it was recorded (Gen. 13:13)—

"The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly."

Ezekiel (16:49-50) describes the sin of Sodom as—

"Fullness of bread . . . abundance of idleness . . . neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

"And they were haughty, and committed abomination."

Isaiah (1:4) states that Jerusalem and her inhabitants were a—

"Sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters.

"They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward."

Resulting from this state, the prophet added—

"Except the Lord of Hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and like unto Gomorrah" (v. 9).

Then, picking up this comparison, the prophet addresses Israel thus (v. 10)—

"Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom. Give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah."

"How is the faithful city become an harlot! Righteousness lodged in it—but now, murderers" (v. 21).

By this same extension of thought, as the True Faith established by the apostles gave place to the Mystery of Iniquity enthroned over all Europe and in the hearts of men in every land, we read of the system which has persecuted God's people, in these words (Rev. 11:8)—

"Their dead bodies shall lie in the street (The Broad Place) of the Great City, which spiritually is called SODOM and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."

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SUCH is the picture before us as Lot turned away eastward from the promised land and—

"Dwelt in the cities of the plain, and **pitched his tent toward Sodom.**"

Instead of dwelling in tents or tabernacles with the faithful, he chose the habitations of wickedness and cruelty. He compromised his position of separation. Without looking for the after effects, he saw only the present moment. Like Jacob, he had to learn by experience the danger of proximity to wickedness (Gen. 33:18)—

"And Jacob came to Shechem and pitched his tent before the city.

"And Dinah, went out to see the daughters of the land—and Shechem the son of Hamor prince of the country took her and defiled her" (Gen. 34:1-2).

Such is cause and effect. The lesson is clear and important. Stay as far as possible from associations with the world—

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

Concerning God's people in relation to the antitypical Sodom, the Mystery of Iniquity, (which is to be destroyed by God), we read in Rev. 18:4—

"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."

So Lot with his substance left Bethel ("House of God") in the heights, to descend into the depths of Sodom, the house of wickedness, and "pitched his tent toward Sodom."

But the mercy and forbearance of God was to follow him there, and watch over him, and demonstrate the patience and love of the Heavenly Father—a divine characteristic we must learn in our dealings with each other.

However we must never presume upon God's mercy by tempting him in a wilful walk in opposition to His will.

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GENESIS 14 illustrates how God endeavoured to instruct Lot and take him away from evil associations. It demonstrates how the Creator uses natural circumstances to instruct and chastise His children. Paul, speaking about this loving concern by God, said (Heb. 12:11):

"No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

The secret is in **being "exercised thereby."** The Greek for exercised is **gumnazo**, from which our word "gymnasium" is derived. It means "to train." So we are trained by the trials which God brings upon us, IF we let these things have the effect they should, by **contemplating their meaning.**

But with Lot (his name means "Veil"), the veil of the flesh was over his eyes and he perceived not the loving care of God. It is important that we examine ourselves in relation to the same lesson.

The kings of Babylon invaded the Jordan valley, overcame the inhabitants, took captives and spoil, including Lot and all his goods and all that he had. Notice the change (Gen. 14:12) from his previous condition of having pitched his tent toward Sodom, from being near Sodom, to where he is now—

"They took Lot, Abram's brother's son, **who dwelt IN Sodom.**"

God took Lot out of Sodom, by the hands of the Babylonians. Lot had chosen to move in amongst these workers of iniquity. The magnetism of the flesh had drawn his family there. Either Lot had married a wife of Canaan or of Sodom. If this be the case there is further illustration of why his steps tended in this direction.

By the evil which God brought upon Sodom He took Lot and his family and goods away from the wicked environment. And Abraham was used by God to extend His mercy in deliverance and set Lot free with his young family.

There must have been some contact between the two families, because one that had escaped the invasion of Sodom came to tell Abraham (Gen. 14:13).

God always provides the right individual at the right time. He never fails to have a man to perform the work He intends to do. This should give us confidence and assurance in all our ways, and thereby thank and praise Him for His goodness unto the children of men.

In Gen. 14:21-23, we find Abraham saying to the King of Sodom —

"I have lift up mine hand to the Lord. I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich."

Abraham the righteous would not compromise his position of complete separation from the workers of iniquity, by taking anything, even the smallest thing, of their goods —

"Touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you."

The lesson is clear and unmistakable for us, coming as it does in God's Word which we read yearly together. How do we react to its teaching in our daily lives?

How did Lot react to this scene enacted before him? How did he respond to the exercise of Divine mercy in saving him from that untoward generation? The lesson was lost upon him. For 20 more years he went back into the sins of the valley of death, letting his young family grow up in the shadow of wickedness.

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ABRAHAM continued his sojourn in righteousness and separation, complying with the Divine requirements —

"Arise, walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (Gen. 13:17).

Abraham faithfully remained a wanderer and a stranger. But Lot took on greater responsibilities among the sons of wickedness, for we find a further step taken by him, more closely identifying himself with Sodom (Gen. 19:1) —

"Lot SAT IN THE GATE of Sodom."

The gate is the place of judgment, of authority and control. He now became more responsible for the situation in the city. We are reminded of Jehoshaphat, a good man, but one who leaned to association with the wicked, doubtless hoping to influence them.

Apparently Abraham was aware of all these events, and was troubled in mind and heart at what he knew. His rescue expedition some years earlier had failed in a permanent sense. Yet he was continuously concerned about the welfare of Lot and his family. There must have been continued communication between the two, for Abraham referred to Lot as righteous. It is possible that Lot realized his position and sought help to extricate himself. We can visualize righteous Abraham

pleading with God on behalf of Lot. This is illustrated when the angel of the Lord advised Abraham of the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:23) —

"Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Shall not the Judge of all earth do right?"

The outcome was that if there were 10 righteous in the city of Sodom, God would not destroy it. The prayer of the righteous would have saved the situation. But there were not 10 righteous in Sodom. Yet the effectual fervent prayer of Abraham did save Lot.

But what about Lot's attitude? He had made the choice. His family had grown to marriageable age. Either some of his children were married to Sodomites, or were about to be married. The error of earlier years was now clearly evident. The fruits of youth were now ripening into the grapes of bitterness and anguish.

Was his position at the gate of the city an attempt to stem the tide of evil?

Certainly Abraham looked upon Lot as righteous. Peter too referred to Lot as just and righteous (2 Pet. 2:7-8)—

"God delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

The Greek for "just" is **dikaio**s and means "innocent, holy and righteous." The same word is used in reference to Abraham and Christ. It is twice translated "righteous" in v. 8.

We cannot question this Divine estimate of Lot, accepting it as the description of his heart and the humble repentance of a man who has seen the error of his way, endeavouring to correct a course of former years. The evil had gone too far. The time for judgment had come.

Of Lot, Peter further adds —

"Just Lot, vexed (the word means "brought down, worn down with pain and toil") with the filthy conversation (conduct and actions) of the wicked . . .

"For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed (meaning "tortured or tormented") his righteous life from day to day with their unlawful deeds."

It is clear that Lot had gotten himself into a very bitter and agonizing position. Though Lot did not comprehend how to be delivered, God was able to effect it. Peter states (2 Pet. 2:9) —

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

Jude declares of God's operations (v. 23)—

"And others, save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

Such a time had come for Lot. The day was far spent; the night was at hand.

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"THERE came two angels to Sodom **at even**" (Gen. 19:1)

"At even" is significant. The day of opportunity was over. Lot now illustrates the true characteristic of hospitality, though he erred in other directions. Like Abraham he entertained angels unawares (Heb. 13:2)—

"Behold, my lords, turn in I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet.

"And he pressed them greatly, and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread and they did eat" (Gen. 19:2-3).

The subsequent events indicate that God does not judge in a capricious manner. The conduct of the men of Sodom was confirmed and judgment fell. In v. 13 the angels declared—

"We will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it."

With this message Lot went to his sons-in-law. He would bear the heavy tidings of his angelic visitors, as one more attempt to plead with his family (v. 14)—

"Up! Get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city!"

What was the reaction?—

"Lot seemed as one that mocked (jested) unto his sons-in-law."

There was no remedy. The door was shut. The angels hasted Lot, his wife, and two daughters out of the city early in the morning. Hesitancy on their part caused the angels to take them by the hand and to lead them away, with the stern injunction—

"Escape for thy life, LOOK NOT BACK" (v. 17).

We also read in this regard that "the Lord was merciful unto him." The longsuffering aspects of the Divine character are nowhere more plainly in evidence.

But faith and obedience are necessary on our part to bring this into focus in our lives. For those who look back this will not be so.

"Look not back." How sadly we read—with all this display of Divine mercy, this longsuffering on God's part, this escaping with the complete loss of everything, this evidence of the sudden destruction of everything with which they were familiar—that (v.26)—

"Lot's wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Her heart was in Sodom, a woman of the world, and she was destroyed in the time of salvation. Here is deliverance early in the morning for the faithful individuals. Lot had entered into Zoar (the "little" city) by the time the sun was up.

And Abraham, what was he doing? He was anxiously awaiting the morning hour. He—

"Gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord, and he beheld the smoke of the country going up as the smoke of a furnace."

What were his thoughts? God had told him that he would save the righteous (v. 29)—

"God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt."

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WHAT is the lesson? We are compassed about with Sodom and Gomorrah. The day is far spent. We have been advised that God will destroy the cities of wickedness in which we dwell.

Do we believe this to be so? Or do our daily actions indicate that the words appear as the voice of a jester or mocker?

The command is to come out. This process constitutes "the Ecclesia." It is proof of really being in the Ecclesia (the "called-out" ones).

We have been delivered from Sodom once by our acceptance of the Truth and belief and baptism. How we returned to dwell in the city and to sit in the gate? We are either in the Ecclesia of God or in the City of Sodom.

As we once more partake of the memorials of the great deliverance, the great salvation wrought by God through Christ, let us look straight forward. Let us flee from the sin which doth so easily beset us. Let us come out and be God's people, and take His hand to lead us, to take hold of His rod and staff. Like Abraham, God will remember our prayers—

"The fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

As we see the evil of this generation confirming the signs of the return of Christ, we hear the Master's voice (Luke 17:28):

"As it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded, (completely concerned with their own little lives of greed and wickedness—wholly unmindful of God) . . .

"But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom (he was the only restraining force in the city, holding back the judgment), it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all."

And Christ added—

"Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."

There will be daily occupations going on. We will be among those who are so occupied. The question for us is what is our frame of mind toward them? The tap on the shoulder, the arousing from the sleep of night, the whispered summons falling upon our ear—

"Escape for your life: look not back!"

No turning back to take the stuff out of the house; no return to the field to pick up the final sheaf. **"Remember Lot's wife."**

In that night — two in one bed, the one taken, the other left; two women grinding at the mill, the one taken and the other left; two men in the field, one taken and the other left.

Are we ready for this awesome moment? It is just about here. If our hearts are with Abraham in the mountains of Israel, away from the wickedness of the world and its pleasures and pursuits, we will be waiting and watching as servants for the day of deliverance, when the Master returns.

He will come in the eventide of their wickedness. May we be ready and awaiting the summons—

"Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). —E.F.H.
