

## Prayers

### Opening prayer

Holy Spirit, You are in touch with the truth within our hearts. You know those things that are so deep we cannot put them into words, You can see the truths to which we have become blind, and You comprehend the experiences of life that we fail to understand. Make sense of all that happens to us, Holy Spirit, and guide us into all truth, so that we may live to Your praise and glory: AMEN

### Prayer Suggestions

**1. For yourself**

*Confess your sins to God, and do not shirk the responsibility of faith, to hand over to the Lord all that is self-centred and not God-centred*

**2. For your friends and family**

*Confess your sins to God, especially those that have hurt members of your own family*

**3. For the church and its work**

*Confess the sins of your church, that is your local church and also your church denomination. Confess at least the divisions that separate it from other members of the Body of Christ*

**4. For your neighbourhood, your country and the world (News)**

*Confess the sins of your nation, and ask the Lord to forgive its godlessness*

### Meditation

Keep going, my soul, keep alert and press on,  
You cannot be a follower of Christ and stand still.

When Satan tries to twist the meaning of your what you say,  
Look to God's Word, learn to discern, let Jesus be your guide.

When others require more of your time than you can give,  
Know your sure foundations, and put Christ and family first.

When you feel tempted to be cross with the church of God,  
Remember, it is Christ's body, and you are a part of it.

When Christ gives you more to do than you've done before,  
Fear nothing, and offer Him your heart and soul and strength,

When you become excited by the glories of earthly success,  
Give it back to your Lord, give it all, no mere tithe is enough.

Keep pressing on, my soul, the future always comes,  
And may you be found in Christ's arms, not wandering!

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## Bible Study

### Bible passage – Genesis 19: 30-38

<sup>30</sup> Because Lot was afraid to stay in Zoar, he left there and went with his two daughters and settled in the hill country where he lived with them in a cave. <sup>31</sup> The elder said to the younger,

'Our father is old, and there is absolutely no-one who would take us in marriage as we might normally expect in this world. <sup>32</sup> Let's do something about it and make our father drunk, then we will lie with him and therefore preserve our family line through children by our father.'

<sup>33</sup> So they made their father drunk that night; and the eldest went in and lay with her father. He was not aware of her coming in or going out. <sup>34</sup> On the next day, the elder said to her sister,

‘Look, I lay last night with my father; let’s make him drunk tonight as well; then you go and lie with him, and we will both preserve our family line through our father.’

<sup>35</sup> So they made their father drunk again that night; and the younger daughter went and lay with him. He was not aware of her coming in or her going out. <sup>36</sup> So both Lot’s daughters became pregnant by their father.

<sup>37</sup> The eldest bore a son, and named him Moab; he is the ancestor of the present day Moabites. <sup>38</sup> The younger bore a son as well, and named him Ben-ammi; he is the ancestor of the Ammonites to this day.

## Review

The incest of Lot and the beginnings of the Ammonite and Moabite peoples is not a pleasant story to read, and it is easy for us to wonder why it is in scripture. What useful purpose could be served by its inclusion? But if we believe that God has given us this story as part of His Word, then there is teaching within it even if it is an awful tale. We must start by accepting that God’s Word sometimes reflects uncomfortable truths about human nature and behaviour which we might wish to ignore; but it never holds back from conveying important messages to us even through the most sordid of human experiences.

The first thing to notice is that the incest of Lot is one of a number of unpleasant stories in Genesis, each of which makes an important contribution to the general themes of the book. The purpose of these stories is

1. to explain the nature of God as Creator with absolute authority in the world,
2. to give a general explanation for the sinful condition of humanity,
3. to explain the basis of God’s relationship with those who He has chosen,
4. to ‘set the scene’ for the world context within which the story of the rest of the Old Testament is set.

The awful story of Cain’s murder of Abel clearly illustrates some of these themes (Gen 4:8-16). The difficult story of the drunkenness of Noah (9:20f.) also tells us about the on-going sins of humanity despite God’s salvation (through the Flood), and it describes the separation of ways between Noah’s sons, which set up the deep historic divisions between God’s chosen people and the ‘Canaanites’ (see earlier studies on Genesis 9,10 and 11). The later story of the rape of Tamar (Gen 38) illustrates yet again the sins of some of the men in God’s chosen people (in this instance, Judah), and His power to work through women to call errant men to account for their behaviour.

Today’s story of the incest of Lot is the final chapter in the saga of his downfall. He was a man who had shared in part of God’s blessings given to his uncle Abram (Gen 12:2,3) under whose spiritual cover he lived for many years and became very wealthy. Then, through prevarication, greed and desire for the things of this world he eventually lost all he had. In the end, he was reduced to living in a cave and having lost all his dignity, he had sex with his own daughters. These two daughters relied upon Lot for their spiritual protection and yet their father had scandalously offered them to a mob for sex (19:8)! The daughters acted correctly, from their point of view; they had a duty to preserve a family line. Although it seems awful to us, scriptures are far more appalled by Lot’s downfall than the actions of the daughters. The result of this incest in our story is the birth of two sons who become the ancestors of the Moabites and the Ammonites; two tribes of people who in later years lived on the eastern side of the Jordan as neighbours of Israel and Judah. We hear a great deal more about these people in later books of the Old Testament.

However, from this point onwards in Genesis, we do not hear any more of Lot, his daughters, or the Ammonites or Moabites. The message of Lot’s behaviour remains as a powerful moral tale about the consequences of compromise with the values of the world. Even the city in which God gave Lot permission to dwell became uncomfortable to him, and, unable to settle with anything that was God’s will for him, he ended his once promising life in a cave (19:30). The man who once competed with Abraham for space within Canaan for his cattle was now cut off from normal human life, and no remnant was left of the dignity and wealth he once possessed.

## Going Deeper

- Lot’s final destiny – a cave
- The significance of Lot’s incest to the book of Genesis
- Ammon and Moab

There is not a great deal more we can add to the moral conclusion we have drawn about Lot, his end is a tragic waste of a life which once looked as if it was headed towards the Lord (see Gen 13)). As we look through the rest of the Bible, we will see how the nations of Moab and Ammon became significant as neighbours to Israel and Judah.

### ***Lot's final destiny – a cave***

In the torrid story of Lot's last days in Sodom, angelic visitors saved him from the city despite his evident wish to stay. They warned him of the coming destruction and eventually had to drag him to safety out of the city. He had vested a decade of his life and all his wealth to his attempt to be accepted by those he called his 'friends' in the city. The irony of his story is palpable, for these people with whom he wished to live and with whom he had spent his riches had bayed at his door like demons, attempting to get at his honoured guests, and he had offered them his virgin daughters for rape.

In our passage, reduced to the state of a drunken stupor, he did what the mob had not done, which was to have sex with his two daughters; and not by his own consent, but by the will of these same daughters whom he had previously been willing to sacrifice. The reason for this unpleasant incident being the fact that he was unable to do the duty of a father for his daughters in those days, which was to find them husbands. As a man, everything he had done had failed, and there was no way that he could attract suitable suitors for his daughters or offer any dowry. Lot is the picture of a broken man, afraid of God and unwilling to accept his benevolence, and even afraid of what he previously loved, the city life. He had ended up living in a cave, normally the dwelling place of the dead (Gen 25:9) or of refugees (see Josh 10:16; 1 Sam 13:6). No wonder the daughters were desperate.

The details of the story are recorded for us briefly and with little comment. Noah had become drunk, but not so drunk that he did not remember what had happened to him (Gen 9:20-24); whereas in this story, it is emphasised that Lot appears to have been totally unaware of what happened (19:33,35). He was a man completely devoid of decision, choice and moral sensitivity; the product of a life of pursuing his own egotistical way at the expense of the way he had been taught by those who fostered his spiritual growth, Terah and Abraham.

### ***The significance of Lot's incest to the book of Genesis***

When we read this story and are scandalised by the incest it describes, we should compare it with the story of Tamar in Genesis 38. There are a number of parallels between these two stories. Firstly, the actions of Tamar in Genesis 38 are commended, not condemned. She sought to become pregnant by Judah, her father-in-law, because he would not fulfil his duty to find her a husband after the death of his sons, Er and Onan, who had been Tamar's husbands, according to tradition, after each of them died in succession. Tamar's actions were highly praised by Genesis, because the son she bore, Perez, continued Judah's ancestral line. This became the line of David and the kings of Judah, and as recorded in Matthew's Gospel, it was also the Messianic line of Christ (Matt 1:1-17ff).

When you read today's passage, it appears that the story writers avoid any moral comment on the incest, just as in the story of Tamar, even though incest was something punishable by death in Israel (Lev. 20:12). The women are treated with favour, and the men are painted as irresponsible, with Lot coming across in this story as the more pathetic figure. The actions of his daughters were not very different from that of Tamar, and though their children were not part of the Messianic line, they did have an important part to play in the Old Testament.

### ***Ammon and Moab***

In other, non-Biblical ancient documents, there are even hints of approval for Lot's daughters, for like Tamar, they did the 'right thing'. The Moabites and Ammonites regarded Lot's daughters as mother figures who founded nations through their sons. This is reflected in the names of the sons, Moab (which means 'from the father') and Ammon (which means 'son of my kin'). Genesis is always interested to trace the origins of the nations which either border on Israel or are part of the Promised Land. Ammon and Moab became nations which occupied the regions east of the river Jordan which were not part of Israel, and for much of the Old Testament there was little fighting between them and God's people; their lands were even regarded as God-given (Deut 2:9,19).

Animosities did lie underneath the surface, however, because when Israel came out of Egypt towards the Promised Land, both these nations opposed God's people (Numbers 22ff, Deut 23:4ff), causing them to re-route even though they promised to travel straight through their lands and take no part of them or cause no fighting. When the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah came to their ends after the time of the great prophets from the eighth century BC onwards, both Ammon and Moab fell out of favour, and were on the receiving end of harsh prophecies from a number of prophets (for example, see Amos 1:13-2:3). The whole story joins with others in Genesis by providing us with an understanding of Israel's neighbours (see also Gen 10:25, 25:12-18; 36:1-43).

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# Discipleship

## Application

If we look at the whole story of Lot, we cannot avoid the conclusion that Genesis describes the spiritual end of someone who had chosen to go his own way instead of accepting the place he could have had attached to Abraham and God's Covenant. We know what God's purposes for Abraham were, and although Lot and Abraham were obliged to separate so that Abraham could pursue his own unique calling (Gen 13), the next chapter of Genesis (14) shows as that he was still a protected man. It is strongly implied that Lot had the opportunities to accept the spiritual cover of Abraham's blessing because he was his nephew, but consistently chose to follow his own way and ignore the paths of God, and this has been laid bare in Genesis 18 and 19. The story of Lot ended, but the story of Abraham went on.

And that is the point. Those who have the chance to respond to God and walk in his ways but consistently chose their own, will one day find out that the end has come. Although they may have lived what was for them a most acceptable life, compromising faith with the ways of the world, the end of this path is disaster, and comes with ignominious speed. The figure we see in this story is bereft of sense, choice, morality and anything that might glamorise Lot's life, and we must thank the scriptures for that. The world in which we live today presents us with an astonishing array of choice and opportunity, far more than Lot's beloved city of Sodom could afford, but we are led to believe by governments and secular culture that the consequence of following our own choices is happiness and contentment. Nothing could be further from the truth, and there is ample evidence to show the failure of godless society in promoting fulfilment both in society and individually. The story of Lot in Genesis is the first major story in the Bible of the failure of a man's life when lived according to his own choices, and it still has much to tell us.

When reading of the dispirited and lonely Lot reduced to living in a cave, I am reminded of the many times that I have taken a funeral at which only one or two family members were present (even some with no-one save a funeral director). By asking a few questions I could discover that the person who had died was perhaps a 'wonderful father', a 'popular man', a 'great engineer', or had some admirable characteristics, some of which was undoubtedly true. Yet at the end, there was hardly anyone there to celebrate their life or testify to that person's existence! What a waste! Further questioning on my part would often expose a downward spiral of dispirited old age, unhappiness and rows within a family, along with explanations as to why this son or daughter couldn't or would not come to the funeral etc. Inwardly, I compared these events to the sad though wonderful funerals I took for those who had died in the faith of Christ as members of their church or chapel through the years of old age. These occasions were full of all the emotions of death and bereavement, yet in a chapel filled with completely with friends and relatives, the joy of the Lord would sometimes burst through, celebrating the life of someone who had victoriously completed their journey of life. In their death they passed on a heritage of faith to others, an inheritance which can never be extinguished.

The difference between the two is the difference between Lot and Abraham.

## Questions for groups

1. Did you feel sorry for the daughters of Lot when reading this story, or feel disgusted by them? Discuss your reactions to the story.
2. What other stories in scripture could be called 'scandalous'. What does God teach us through them?
3. In your group, try to summarise the lessons we can learn from the life of Lot. What can this teach us today?

## Discipleship challenges

- *Spend a week praying about one thing. Is your life more like the story of Abraham in Genesis (with all his faults and problems) or more like Lot. If it seems that not much is happening then you may need to persist in prayer.*
- *Read some of the Biblical references in this study to make sure you understand the explanation of the story of Lot in this study.*

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## Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, I set down my tasks at the end of this day in peace and in tranquillity. Bring me to a place of rest where my soul can commune with You without the problems of mental stress or the noise of work. And within that peace, heal me and restore me I pray. Thank You, Lord Jesus, Thank You: AMEN

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