

Old Testament 8
Living Righteously in a Wicked World
(Genesis 13-14; 18-19)

(This material provides inspirational background)

I. With the world in great turmoil, many of us would like to see into the future. **We should recognize that The Old Testament is a key instrument the Lord has given us where we can do just that. The Lord** has shown us the types of wickedness as well as the kinds of destructions which will occur in the Last Days, and told us how to live righteously in such a wicked world.

- A. Events in the Old Testament were actual events experienced by the Lord's people, but through them, the Lord foretold our future, for these events also **bore witness of our days**. When all the witnesses are put together, they give us strong warnings and important guidance.
- B. When the Savior came, **Jesus confirmed** these events were prophetic of our days.
 - 1. "But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. **Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed (Luke 17:28-37)**.
 - 2. What did the Savior mean when He then said, "...Remember Lot's wife." (The heart of Lot's wife was not fully ready to leave the wickedness of the world. Though warned, she "turned back," as the Lord later warned we must not do.

II. Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction reveals important truths about our days, including how to live righteously in an increasingly wicked world?

- A. Compare these ancient events and our own day:
 - 1. Gen. 18:20; Genesis 19:1-13; JST 19:9-15. What are the reasons the Lord felt He must destroy Sodom and Gomorrah? (Great sexual wickedness, including, but not exclusive to **the practice** of homosexuality). (Note JST: Lot did *not* want to send his daughters out).
 - a. How can we obtain the pure heart which will keep us away from every kind of immorality today?
 - 2. Ezekiel 16:49-50 reveals more truths of Sodom's wickedness, which applies to far more of us. (Great pride, too much idleness, and insufficient care for poor and needy.)
 - 3. Gen. 19:24. What was the means of destruction? (By fire; this will be also part of Last Days destruction).

B. Scripture Search and Discussion:

- 1. Abraham 1:1-5. What did Abraham do seeing the wickedness of his generation? (He sought for the priesthood.)
- 2. How does the priesthood give us protection? (See JST Genesis 14:27, 30-31. What do these scriptures reveal about the full power of the priesthood?
"For God having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself: that every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course: To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the

presence of God; to do all thing according to his will, according to his command, subdue principalities and powers; ..." (JST Gen. 14:30-31).

B. Here is a supportive true story of how following the Priesthood can save us:

Dorothea Speth Condie lived with her family in Dresden, Germany during World War II. February 13, 1945, the allies bombed their city. Many homes nearby were set ablaze. Eventually their own home began to burn and they were lucky to escape. Most of the neighborhood homes were already burned or burning, and they realized they needed to flee. But the fires had caused a huge firestorm and the streets had huge bomb craters. The family quickly decided they must flee to the Elbe River about four blocks away, and there was a straight, wide street which led directly to its banks. For safety, they did not all go together. The father and one sister began to lead the way. The rest were to follow.

But they were surprised when the father went to a narrow, indirect, side street instead of the wide street. It seemed more dangerous because of its narrow path through burning buildings. The mother cried out to him to take the wide street. But he could not hear. Finally another sister said, "Mom, let's follow Dad; he holds the Priesthood!"

The family followed down the narrower, less direct way. They reached the Elbe safely. Shortly after, a neighborhood woman arrived as well. But she was alone and in great anguish. She and her husband had tried to come down the wide street. Her husband, with longer legs, was ahead. Suddenly, he burst into flames. An invisible liquid phosphorous from the bombs had poured out upon the street. Anyone who stepped upon it was immediately set ablaze.

The family knew it was following the priesthood which had saved them. (From "Let's Follow Dad --- He Holds the Priesthood," *Behind the Iron Curtain*, collected and translated by Garold N. Davis & Norma S. Davis)

D. Here are further scriptures which show how living righteously will save us from the wickedness which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

1. Genesis 14:17-20 and JST Gen. 14:36-38. Without an extensive church structure, what were Abraham's tithing to be used for? (To help the poor. v. 38)
2. In our day where fast and other offerings are specifically to help the poor, how does tithing still bless lives of the needy and bless us spiritually?
3. Malachi 3:5, 9 -11; 4:1-3. How does Malachi indicate paying tithes and offerings will be a way of providing us protection in the last days?
4. Has the Lord said or shown that how we bless others will affect the way He blesses us? Ask for examples or scripture citations? (One is Matthew 5:7)

E. Further Scripture Search.

1. Genesis 13:7-13. How did Abraham show a pure heart? (He refused to contend and gave Lot first choice, taking desert land rather than more prosperous, but wicked lands near Sodom and Gomorrah.)
2. How do our early correct choices keep us far from temptation?
3. Genesis 14:8 – 16, 21-24. How did Abraham continue to show his purity? (He rescued Lot and goods but refused to take "even a thread" of reward from a wicked source.)

III. Living in a wicked world can become especially challenging in our days. But there are some wonderful, true examples of how others have done it under extremely difficult circumstances:

A. Latter-day Saints in Germany during World War II have demonstrated how to live righteously in a wicked world. Roger P. Minert from BYU and student helpers gathered stories of how they did it. One member refused to join the Nazi party but overcame ostracism by becoming active in a group honoring German heritage. Another young woman avoided the Hitler Youth Group by volunteering for the Society for Germans in Foreign Nations, and aided German refugees fleeing Eastern Europe. (Nathan N. Waite, in *BYU Magazine*, Winter 2010, p. 55).

These people showed we can and should keep completely away from wickedness, but find other ways to serve in the world.

IV. The world is currently struggling with the growth of immorality of all kinds. Many within the church are confused. But the prophets have given clear prophetic warning:

* All immorality is against God's law. Consequences will occur.

* Those who have tendency toward homosexuality should be shown love.

(See Dallin Oaks, "Truth and Tolerance," February *Ensign*, 2013.

* See recent statement made by the First Presidency concerning this issue.

* Its practice is contrary to God's overall purpose. The great promises given to Abraham, of great seed, could never come to pass. We are forewarned. Heeding will protect us.

V. The Lord has said He will destroy the earth when the wicked are "ripened in iniquity."

Scripture Search:

1. Genesis 18:23-33; and briefly review 19:1-13. Since Sodom was destroyed, we know it was "ripened in iniquity. What can we learn from the events of Sodom which reveals what "ripened in iniquity" means? (The great majority of the people will be wicked; then they will turn upon those righteous among them who have been the very means of their preservation.)
2. Confirming scripture. Helaman 13:12-14.

VI: Summary:

We do indeed live in times of great wickedness. There are many signs of a "ripening in iniquity." But we can learn from Abraham four ways to keep ourselves distant from temptation, and stay protected. They are:

- Seek and be valiant to and under the Priesthood.
- Pay tithes and offerings, thus blessing others.
- Maintain Purity of Heart, which will keep us distant from sin.
- Heed and obey the Prophetic Warnings.