

Old Testament # 8
Living Righteously in a Wicked World
(Genesis 13-14; 18-19)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background and evidences supporting the Restoration)

I. With the world in great turmoil, many of us would like to see into the future.

- A. **The Old Testament is a key instrument the Lord gave us so we can do just that.**
- B. The Lord has shown us the types of wickedness of our days, as well as the kinds of destructions which will eventually occur because of it.
- C. Most importantly, He has told us **how to live righteously in our wicked world.**
- D. Events in the Old Testament were actual events experienced by the Lord's people, but through them, the Lord foretold **our future and gave us key guides.**

II. Abraham showed how to live righteously, though wickedness swirled around him.

A. Abraham saw the wickedness of his generation, including that of his own father, but he responded by seeking for righteousness, and particularly for the priesthood (Abraham 1:1-5).

B. For the priesthood gives us protection (See JST Genesis 14:27, 30-31).

C. The Lord has promised its power will overcome evil.

1. "For God having sworn ... with an oath by himself: that everyone **being ordained** after this order and calling **should have power, by faith, ... 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). (Emphasis added)

2. There are many wonderful examples of how the Priesthood has done just that!

3. A major one would be how the Priesthood worked to allow Temple and other blessings to go to the Saints in East Germany, even though they were still trapped behind the Iron Curtain and under a Communist dictator. Truly the Priesthood "broke the bands" and "subdued evil powers." (See Heidi Swinton, *To The Rescue: The Biography of Thomas S. Monson*, Deseret Book, 2010 pp, 279-327).

4. Here is another true example of how following the Priesthood can save us:

Dorothea Speth Condie lived in Dresden, Germany during World War II. On February 13, 1945, the allies bombed their city. Many homes were set ablaze and eventually their own home began to burn; 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. 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 the next group were surprised when the father ran to a narrow, indirect, side street instead of the wide straight street. To them 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 terrible 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 recognized 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).

III. Jesus **confirmed** the events of Sodom and Gomorrah were prophetic of our days.

A. “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).

B. When the Savior later added, “...Remember Lot’s wife,” He was revealing that the **heart of Lot’s wife was not fully ready to leave the wickedness of the world**. For though fleeing, she “turned back.” The Lord warned us we must be fully ready to abandon wickedness.

IV. Sodom and Gomorrah’s story reveals further truths about how to live righteously in an increasingly wicked world.

A. Compare these ancient events and our own day:

1. The reasons the Lord felt He must destroy Sodom and Gomorrah were: great sexual wickedness, including, but not exclusive to the **practice** of homosexuality (Gen.18:20; Genesis 19:1-13; JST 19:9-15. Note JST: Lot did *not* want to send his daughters out).

2. So we learn we must **seek a pure heart** which will keep us away from **every kind of immorality**.

3. Ezekiel, calling Jerusalem and Samaria Sodoms, revealed that their great pride, too much idleness, and insufficient care for the poor and needy are also a part of this wickedness (Ezekiel 16:49-50).

4. Note the means of destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was by fire --- a deliberate parallel to the Last Days Destruction (Gen. 19:24).

V. There are more scriptures which show how living righteously will save us from the wickedness which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

A. Abraham paid his tithing, thus offering help to the poor (Genesis 14:17-20 and JST Gen. 14:36-38).

B. Malachi taught paying tithes and offerings will offer protection to us in the last days (Malachi 3:5, 9 -11; 4:1-3).

1. The Lord said He would save the cities if He found only ten obedient. Is there a relationship to that and the 10% we are asked to pay to prove our faithfulness?

C. Abraham showed he had a pure heart when he refused to contend and gave Lot first choice, taking desert land rather than more prosperous, but wicked lands near Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 13:7-13).

D. Thus making wise choices can keep us far from temptation.

E. Abraham showed his further integrity by rescuing Lot and his goods but refusing to take “even a thread” of reward from a wicked source (Genesis 14:8 – 16, 21-24).

VI. Living in a world of great temptation is very challenging. But there are some wonderful, true examples of how others have done it under extremely difficult circumstances:

A. Tom Christofferson, who has same-sex attraction, for many years lived a life style of such.

But he came to realize that this life style was not conducive to feeling the Spirit, which he had experienced in his early life, and which he dearly longed for.

Though it was difficult, with the help of many very loving Saints, he was able to give up the practices he had engaged in. Though it is still not easy to undergo the external loneliness which this has brought him, he does now feel the Spirit again in his life, which sustains him.

(As shared in his story, *That We May be One: A Gay Mormon's Perspective on Faith and Family*, Deseret Book, 2017.)

VII. 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:

A. **All immorality** is against God's law, and eventually consequences will occur.

B. Nevertheless, all who have become entrapped in these various temptations should be shown love (See Dallin H. Oaks, "Truth and Tolerance," February *Ensign*, 2013), hoping to make a difference.

C. But the Lord's Covenants, which are full of unimagined Blessing and Power, are predicated upon obedience to His Laws.

D. Not only has the Lord reconfirmed His overall plan for man's Great and Eternal Destiny, He did so **in anticipation** of our current difficult situation (See Elder Dallin H. Oaks "The Plan and the Proclamation," General Conference, November 2017).

E. **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints understands the fuller purposes of the Lord -- Eternal Lives, as revealed through the Abrahamic Covenant.** Same sex relationships simply cannot attain the great blessings (multiplicity of seed) the Lord has ultimately promised Abraham in His covenants.

1. I personally feel it likely the location of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Dead Sea, was witness that **not giving out new life will eventually lead to selfishness, and a deadness of spirit**, as well.

F. Nevertheless, we should have compassion on those who struggle with this trial, remembering that the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were of many different kinds, likely including our own temptations.

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

A. Since Sodom was destroyed, we know it was "ripened in iniquity." Events at Sodom and Gomorrah reveal **what "ripened in iniquity" means.**

B. The great majority of the people who were wicked **turned upon those righteous among them who had been the very means of their preservation** (Genesis 18:23-33; 9:1-13; See also Helaman 13:12-14).

C. Unfortunately, because the world as a whole is blind, [a description of Gommorites] and do not see the great blessings the Lord is offering, **many today are turning upon the Latter-day Saints for what they feel are unkind and unjust views.**

E. If we understand the prophetic patterns the Lord gave us in the Old Testament, we will recognize that all these things are coming to pass in our day.

F. This will help us to stand firm, in spite of such false judgments, and help us to remain faithful to the sacred Covenants which were revealed at the time of Abraham, but are Eternal.

The many exact parallels between our time and Sodom and Gomorrah are, and are meant to me, eye-opening and astonishing.