

Who was Lot in the Bible?

Lot was the grandson of Terah, son of Haran, and nephew of Abram (Abraham). He was likely born in Ur of the Chaldeans. Lot's father Haran died unexpectedly, and so Lot was taken in by the rest of his family.

At some point, possibly soon after Haran's death, Lot's grandfather Terah decided to relocate his entire family to Canaan. They ended up settling in Harran instead. After Terah's death the Lord spoke to Abram and told him to resume the journey to Canaan, promising to make him into a great nation (Genesis 12:1-3). Abram set out on this journey, and Lot went with him.

When they came to Bethel, Abram's and Lot's sheepherders quarreled because there was not enough land to support the amount of livestock each man owned. So Abram presented an offer to Lot: they would part company, and Lot could have first pick of the land he would occupy (Genesis 13:8-9). Lot chose the land near the Jordan River, as it was rich and lush. Abram took other land, and Lot left his uncle and settled his family near the sinful city of Sodom (verse 12).

The consequences of Lot's selfish choice soon caught up with him. Five kings in the area (the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboym, and Bela) were subjects of King Kedorlaomer, and they rose up against him (Genesis 14:4). But Kedorlaomer gathered his allies and defeated the rebelling kings. The victors seized all the goods in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and they took Lot and his family as part of the plunder (verse 12). When Abram heard of this, he and his fighting men attacked Kedorlaomer's army at night and won. He recovered Lot and his family, as well as all the goods the army had taken from Sodom and Gomorrah (verse 16). Afterward, Lot returned to Sodom.

But Lot's hardships did not end there. Sodom was very wicked, and, although Lot was counted as a righteous man (2 Peter 2:7-8), he allowed his family to become entrenched in the city and its culture. God resolved to utterly destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plain for their great sin, but in His grace He sent two angels to Sodom to rescue Lot and his family from the fate of the city. As Lot sat in the gateway of the city, he saw the two angels and, mistaking them for regular men, invited them to stay at his house (Genesis 19:1-2). The angels told Lot they would spend the night in the town square, but Lot insisted strongly, knowing how dangerous the people of the city were. The angels accepted the invitation, and Lot prepared a meal for them and provided a place for them to sleep.

Before the angels settled in for the night, a crowd of men from all over the city gathered outside of Lot's house. They demanded access to Lot's guests in order to have homosexual relations with them (Genesis 19:4-5). We can see the effect the city had upon Lot here, for, in an effort to protect the men under his roof, Lot offered his two daughters instead (verse 8). But the crowd wanted the men, and they tried to break into Lot's house. The two angels quickly pulled Lot inside, shut the door, and struck the men outside with blindness. They ordered Lot to gather up his family and leave immediately, for they were going to utterly destroy the city and everyone in it (verses 12-13).

Lot spoke with his sons-in-law, but they refused to leave, considering Lot's warning about impending judgment to be a joke (Genesis 19:14). When the time of destruction drew near, Lot was still hesitating, and the angels had to physically drag Lot, his wife, and his two daughters out of the city (verse 16). They urged Lot to go to the mountains, but Lot requested leave to run to the nearby town of Zoar instead (verses 17-20). The Lord

granted this request and vowed to spare that city for Lot's sake. As they fled, Lot's wife looked back at Sodom. Because she loved Sodom and desired it, the Lord turned her into a pillar of salt (verse 26; see also Luke 17:30-33).

After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot was afraid to stay in Zoar. So he settled in the mountains with his daughters. He was destitute—he had lost everything when Sodom was destroyed—and so the family lived in a cave (Genesis 19:30). It was here that Lot's daughters devised a disturbing plan to continue the family line: they would get Lot so drunk that he didn't know what was happening and then sleep with him (verses 31-32). Both women became pregnant and had sons named Moab and Ben-Ammi. These two boys would become the father of the Moabites and the Ammonites (verses 37-38). Many years later, when the Israelites were on their way to the Promised Land, the Lord ordered His people to preserve the Moabites and the Ammonites on Lot's behalf (Deuteronomy 2:9, 19).

Much of Lot's life is a picture of the consequences of greed and the negative influence of a sinful environment. Lot knew God, but he chose to live among people who would lead his family into sin and complacency. But Lot's story is also an illustration of God's great mercy—in spite of Lot's poor choices, God saved him and his daughters from a violent end in Sodom and preserved his line throughout the ages.