

## How Was It in the Days of Noah and of Lot?.

Text: Luke 17:26-37

1) The people crowded God out of their lives

Suggested Hymns:

2) People were unprepared

499, 101, 488, 485, 514

3) A few people escaped

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 17:26-37, <sup>26</sup> *“And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: <sup>27</sup> “They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.*

<sup>28</sup> *“Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; <sup>29</sup> “but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. <sup>30</sup> “Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. <sup>31</sup> “In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back.*

<sup>32</sup> *“Remember Lot’s wife. <sup>33</sup> “Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. <sup>34</sup> “I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. <sup>35</sup> “Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. <sup>36</sup> “Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left.” <sup>37</sup> And they answered and said to Him, “Where, Lord?” So He said to them, “Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.” (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Someday Jesus will come back, but no one except the Father knows what day that will be. This does not mean that we have no idea as to whether Christ’s return lies in the near or in the distant future.

Jesus Himself has given us signs which will indicate whether His day is near or not. He has told us that wars, distress of nations, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, abnormal phenomena in the skies, the coming of false Christs and false prophets, a great falling away from the faith, an increase of wickedness, and a number of other things will tell us that His return is near.

Jesus tells us of another sign in Matthew 24:14, *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

Anyone who pays attention to these warnings and signs of Jesus cannot but agree that these things are happening and that the end of all things is at hand.

But who is doing this? How many people are there in the world who are watching how one sign after another is being fulfilled? There are some people, but not many.

The vast majority of people are living without any concern whether the day of Christ and the end of the world are near or not. And this very failure of people to watch, is to be for us, another sign that the return of Christ is near. That is the very thing which Jesus wants to impress upon our minds in the Gospel for today.

In our text Jesus said, *“And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man.”* Let us compare our days with those of Noah and Lot as we now ask and answer the question, *How Was It in the Days of Noah and of Lot?* May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. The People Crowded God Out Of Their Lives**

How was it in those days? They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, they bought, they sold, they planted, and they built.

Something about this list of activities strikes us as strange. It is a list of human activities which are actually commanded and approved by God. What is wrong with eating and drinking, with marrying and being given in marriage, with buying and selling, and with planting and building? Ordinarily, nothing! God Himself commanded in Genesis 1:28, *“Be fruitful and multiply.”* God blessed marriage.

God commanded men to work. Jesus said that those who will not work should not eat as written in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, ***If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.*** If that is the case, what is Jesus driving at?

We know that He is finding fault with the people of Noah's and Lot's days. He is driving at the fact that these people were so wrapped up in these normal activities that they crowded God completely out of their lives. They gave so much attention to food and drink, to courtship and marriage, and to farming, business, and building that they had no time for God's affairs.

They forgot worship, forgot salvation, and forgot the work of God. And that is always fatal. You do not have to be wicked to destroy your soul. All you need to do is to forget God who gave you your soul and who redeemed it.

Are people like that in our day? There is only one answer. They certainly are. In fact, they are worse. The people in Noah's did not have the dozens of things which people have now to crowd God out of their lives.

They did not have daily newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines, radios, TV sets, cars, planes, movies, sports arenas, long weekends, and long vacations. Many people think even less about God now than they did then.

Many people think that the earth is the only place to fix our hope. They eat and drink without prayer to God who opens His hand to satisfy the desire of every living thing. They plant, cultivate, and harvest without a thought of God who makes the sun to shine and the rain to fall. They marry without God who instituted marriage.

They are interested in their family affairs, but not in the affairs of the family of God. They are interested in houses, but not in the house of God. They are interested in solar and natural lighting, but not in Him who is the Light of the soul. They are interested in natural cures or penicillin, antibiotics and other wonder drugs, but not in the divine remedy for the sickness of sin.

They cry out for a four-day week, but then rob God of that one day which they should voluntarily give to Him.

Look where you like, and you will see that people are today, just as they were, in the days of Noah and Lot. They permit normal human activities, things which are not wrong in themselves, to crowd God out of their lives. And that, as

we said, is always fatal to the soul. When you forget God, you are unprepared for the destruction which will surely come.

## 2. People Were Unprepared for the Destruction Which Came

The people of Noah's day and of Lot's day were unprepared for the destruction which came. In Noah's day it was the Flood. In Lot's day it was the rain of fire and brimstone. In both cases people could have known that the end was near.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness. For one hundred and twenty years he told people about the doom which was to come. During those years when the ark was under construction, every timber, every board, every peg, and every pound of pitch shouted the warning at them. But they were too busy to listen.

Instead they ridiculed this "crazy" man who was building the big boat on dry land far from the sea. And what happened? On a day when men were working in their fields, when carpenters were building houses, and when merchants were buying and selling, it began to rain.

They said, "*Never mind, it will stop.*" But it did not. It did not stop for forty days and forty nights. It became the world-wide flood which destroyed them all.

It was similar in the days of Lot. Lot warned people against their wickedness, but his voice went unheard. One day the sun rose on earth. People were engaged in their normal activities. It was a beautiful day. But then it began to rain; hot rain, rain of fire and brimstone. All were unprepared, and so it destroyed them all.

Our text says, <sup>28</sup> "***Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built;*** <sup>29</sup> "***but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.***

The conclusion is in verse 30, <sup>30</sup> "***Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.*** This means that people will be busy. They will be busy with weddings, with crops, with marketing, with construction, and the like. There will be no warning. The end will then come with such startling and unexpected suddenness that "***he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the***

*house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back.*” The great tragedy will be that people will be unprepared for the destruction. And for those people destruction will mean hell.

### **3. There Were A Few People Who Escaped**

However, not all were destroyed in the days of Noah and of Lot. A few escaped. *“Noah entered into the ark.”* He did not go in alone. He went in with his wife, his three sons, and their wives. Why were they saved? Noah was the man to whom God had said in Genesis 7:1, *“Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation.”*

They listened to God. They had time for Him. They did His work. They believed in Christ. So God said to Noah, *Come into the ark, you and all your household.*

Furthermore, *“Lot went out of Sodom.”* Peter calls him *“righteous Lot,”* a man *“who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked.”* Nor did he escape alone. His wife and his two daughters went with him. True enough, *“Remember Lot’s wife”* our text tells us. Her heart was still attached to the things which Sodom offered her for this life. She looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt.

And as it was in the days of Noah and Lot, so shall it be when the Son of Man comes. Some people will escape. Jesus says, <sup>34</sup> *“I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. <sup>35</sup> “Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. <sup>36</sup> “Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left.”* Some people will be taken to heaven, but the rest will be left for eternal destruction in hell.

Do not get the idea that these words of Jesus imply an arbitrary separation. They do not. The right to escape will be based on the same thing on which it was based in the days of Noah and Lot. Christ will only ask, *“Who is like righteous Noah?”* and *“Who is like righteous Lot?”* In the Day of Christ *“the just shall live by his faith.”<sup>1</sup>*

This means that your faith cannot save another person even if he or she is your workmate or even your spouse. You must believe for yourself.

Luther commented on this text, *“The Just Shall Live by His Faith”* Let no one hope to be saved through another’s faith or work. This cannot be done even through Mary or any saint’s work or faith; no, not even through Christ’s work and faith but only through your own faith. For if you yourself do not have faith, God will not permit Mary or any other saint, or even Christ Himself, to substitute for you in such a way that you are pious and just.<sup>2</sup>

Those who have received through faith, the righteousness provided by Christ through His holy life and through His atonement for their sin on Calvary’s cross will be taken to live forever with Christ.

Will you be one of these? Those who escaped in the days of the Flood and in the days of Sodom’s destruction were normal human beings. They engaged in all normal human activities. But they did not forget God and His Christ. We must be as they were.

What we have said, therefore, calls for some earnest soul-searching. We are very busy people because we are children of a very busy age. But we must never permit the affairs of this life to rule us and overwhelm us so that we have no time for living communion with our Saviour. We must never seek to save our life by pampering ourselves, by concentrating all our thoughts and activities on material things.

Our text says, *“Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.”* Find time for Jesus. Find time to worship Him. Find time for His Word, His house, and His Table. Be ready to risk everything for Him. And keep your eyes open. Watch for the eagles of judgment which are already flocking together for the judgment of a world which has become a putrid carcass.

Then when Jesus comes, you will be ready, and you will be taken with those who will hear Him say, *“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”*<sup>3</sup> Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Habakkuk 2:4

<sup>2</sup> E. M. Plass, *What Luther Says*, St. Louis: Concordia, 1991, No. 1391, p471

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 25:34