Fulfilled Prophecies

Noah, Lot, And Jerusalem: Three Judgment Patterns



By Dan Maines

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Matthew 24 and Luke 17 Compared With Genesis

Introduction

† Jesus didn't introduce an unfamiliar kind of judgment when He warned His disciples about Jerusalem. He pointed them back to Noah and Lot, two accounts in Genesis where ordinary life continued until a decisive judgment arrived.

† These accounts weren't identical in every detail. The flood was widespread, Sodom's destruction was local, and Jerusalem's judgment was carried out through war. Their shared pattern was warning, ordinary activity, separation, sudden destruction, and deliverance for those who obeyed God's word.

† The question isn't whether the flood and Sodom were real. They were. The question is why Jesus used them when speaking to His own generation about the coming judgment. Matthew 24 and Luke 17 supply the context, and Luke 21 identifies the city in danger.

Genesis 6:11-13

Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for humanity had corrupted its way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, The end of humanity has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of people; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

† God's judgment in Noah's days wasn't arbitrary. Genesis describes a world corrupted by violence, and God announced the destruction that was coming.

† The warning came before the catastrophe. Noah's obedience showed that deliverance depended on taking God's word seriously rather than following the surrounding culture (Genesis 6:22).

Genesis 7:1, 7, 16, 21-23

Then the Lord said to Noah, Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this generation. Then Noah and his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives with him

entered the ark because of the waters of the flood. Those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and the Lord closed the door behind him. So all creatures that moved on the earth perished: birds, livestock, animals, and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. So He wiped out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from mankind to animals, to crawling things, and the birds of the sky, and they were wiped out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.

† Noah entered the ark with his household before the waters overwhelmed those outside. God provided the means of preservation before the judgment arrived.

† The door's closing marked a decisive separation. Jesus later drew attention to the fact that the people who ignored the warning didn't recognize the danger until judgment overtook them (Matthew 24:38-39).

† The historical flood and the later judgment on Jerusalem weren't the same event. Jesus used the earlier event as a pattern that His listeners could recognize.

Genesis 19:12-17

Then the two men said to Lot, "Whom else do you have here? A son-in-law and your sons and daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring them out of the place; for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the Lord that the Lord has sent us to destroy it." So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, "Up, get out of this place, for the Lord is destroying the city." But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be joking. When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city." But he hesitated. So the men grasped his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, because the compassion of the Lord was upon him; and they brought him out and put him outside the city. When they had brought them outside, one said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the surrounding area; escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away."

† Lot was told to leave Sodom before its destruction. The instruction wasn't to remain in the city and wait for a rescue after judgment had begun.

† The angels urged immediate departure. Lot's deliverance required action, and the warning concerned a specific place that was about to be destroyed.

† This prepares us to understand why Jesus later told people in Judea to flee rather than return to collect their possessions (Luke 17:31; Luke 21:21).

Genesis 19:24-26

Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah from the Lord out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities, and all the surrounding area, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But Lot's wife, from behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

† Sodom's destruction came after Lot had been brought out. The contrast was between those who escaped and those who remained in the condemned city.

† Lot's wife became a warning because she looked back. Jesus' brief command to remember her makes sense in a setting where hesitation and attachment to possessions could cost a person their life (Luke 17:32).

† The lesson isn't that every city faces the same historical event. It's that a clear warning must be obeyed before the opportunity to escape is gone.

Matthew 24:15-22

"Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place-let the reader understand-then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get things out of his house. And whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those women who are pregnant, and to those who are nursing babies in those days! Moreover, pray that when you flee, it will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will again. And if those days had not been cut short, no life would have been

saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

† Jesus gave a recognizable sign and told those in Judea to flee to the mountains. The instruction was geographical, urgent, and suited to the danger facing first-century Judea.

† People on rooftops and in fields weren't to return for their belongings. That urgency closely resembles Lot's departure from Sodom (Genesis 19:17).

† Jesus spoke of great tribulation, but He also described a shortened period for the sake of the elect. The warning concerned real people who could act on what He said.

Matthew 24:34-39

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. But about that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

† Jesus placed the events He had described within the lifetime of that generation. His statement controls the time frame of the warnings that came before it.

† The comparison with Noah focuses on ordinary activities continuing until destruction arrived. Eating, drinking, and marrying weren't themselves the offenses. The danger was carrying on without recognizing the approaching judgment.

† Jesus wasn't telling His disciples to calculate an event thousands of years beyond their lifetime. He was telling them to watch and remain faithful in the crisis He had described (Matthew 24:42).

Luke 17:26-33

And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so will it also be in the days of the Son of Man: people were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, and they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, and they were building; but on the day that Lot left Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, the one who will be on the housetop, with his goods in the house, must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one in the field must not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever strives to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will keep it.

† Luke records both comparisons together. In Noah's days people carried on with daily life until the flood came; in Lot's days they did the same until Sodom was destroyed.

† Jesus then connected these patterns with the day the Son of Man was revealed. His immediate instructions about rooftops, possessions, and not turning back recall Lot's escape.

† The command to remember Lot's wife emphasizes the cost of clinging to what was passing away. Preserving one's life at any cost wasn't the same as faithful obedience.

Luke 21:20-24

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are inside the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of punishment, so that all things which have been written will be fulfilled. Woe to those women who are pregnant, and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people; and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

† Luke names the concrete sign: Jerusalem surrounded by armies. He then instructs those in Judea to flee and those inside the city to leave.

† Jesus calls these days of vengeance, when what had been written would be fulfilled. The destruction of Jerusalem wasn't an unexplained disaster but a covenant judgment announced beforehand.

† The warning fits the pattern of Noah and Lot: God announces judgment, gives an opportunity to escape, and then the threatened destruction falls. Jerusalem is the named location in Luke's account.

Luke 21:32-33

Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

† Luke preserves the same generational time marker found in Matthew. Jesus said that generation wouldn't pass away until all these things had taken place.

† The language of heaven and earth passing away underscores the certainty of His words. It shouldn't be used to erase the explicit first-century setting of the siege warning.

† The central issue is whether we let Jesus' audience, geography, and time statements guide our interpretation.

Historical References

† Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Books 5-6, describes the Roman siege of Jerusalem, famine within the city, fierce internal conflict, and the destruction of the temple in AD 70.

† Tacitus, Histories 5.10-13, provides a Roman account of the conflict surrounding Jerusalem and its siege. His testimony comes from outside the Christian community.

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5, reports a tradition that members of the Jerusalem church departed for Pella before the war. This is a later historical report, not an eyewitness account, and it should be

distinguished from Jesus' recorded command to flee.

† These sources don't prove every detail of a theological interpretation, but they establish the historical reality of the catastrophe that followed Jesus' warning.

How It Applies To Us Today

† We're not waiting for a future Roman siege to fulfill Jesus' instructions to first-century Judea. The judgment He warned about belongs to the historical setting He identified (Luke 21:20-24, 32).

† Noah teaches us to trust God's warning even when ordinary life continues. Lot teaches us not to let possessions or familiarity keep us from obedience. Jerusalem teaches us to read prophecy in its stated historical context.

† We live under the reign of Christ, not under a threat that Jerusalem's covenant judgment still lies ahead. Our calling is to remain faithful, love one another, and proclaim the salvation accomplished through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:22-24).

† The fulfilled perspective doesn't remove the moral seriousness of Scripture. It shows that Jesus kept His word to His own generation, and that His faithfulness gives us confidence today.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Did Jesus say the flood and Sodom were only symbols?

A: No. He used the accounts in Genesis as historical examples of how judgment overtook people who ignored the warning (Genesis 7:21-23; Genesis 19:24-26; Luke 17:26-30).

Q: Why connect these accounts with Jerusalem?

A: Jesus repeated the same urgent instructions about leaving without returning for possessions, and Luke explicitly identified Jerusalem surrounded by armies as the sign to flee (Luke 17:31-32; Luke 21:20-21).

Q: Does Matthew 24:34 refer to a generation thousands of years later?

A: In the fulfilled interpretation, no. Jesus addressed His contemporaries and said that generation wouldn't pass away until all these things took place (Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:32).

Q: Were believers promised that no one would suffer during the war?

A: No. Jesus gave warnings to flee, not a guarantee that every believer would escape every hardship. The command itself shows the danger was real (Matthew 24:16-22).

Q: Does fulfillment mean we no longer need to obey Christ?

A: Not at all. His fulfilled warnings demonstrate His reliability, while His commands to love and remain faithful still guide our lives (John 13:34-35).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Genesis 6:11-13; Genesis 7:1, 7, 16, 21-23; Genesis 19:12-17; Genesis 19:24-26; Matthew 24:15-22; Matthew 24:34-39; Luke 17:26-33; Luke 21:20-24; Luke 21:32-33

† Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Books 5-6; Tacitus, Histories 5.10-13; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5

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