

Luke 17:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Remember Lot's wife.

Analysis

Remember Lot's wife. Jesus condenses an entire warning into three words. The command **Remember** (μνημονεύετε, mnēmoneuete)—present imperative, ongoing obligation—calls for continual mindfulness. **Lot's wife** (τῆς γυναικὸς Λώτ, tēs gynaikos Lōt) refers to Genesis 19:26: 'But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.' She escaped Sodom physically but looked back longingly, disobeying the angel's explicit command: 'look not behind thee' (Genesis 19:17). Her backward glance betrayed divided heart—body fleeing, heart remaining. God's judgment was immediate and permanent: petrification into a salt pillar.

What made her look back? Attachment to Sodom—her home, possessions, life, perhaps daughters-in-law left behind (Genesis 19:14). She couldn't fully release the condemned city. Her backward look symbolizes divided loyalty, half-hearted obedience, love of this world over God. Jesus uses her as negative example: don't let earthly attachments cause you to hesitate or look back when judgment comes. The New Testament echoes this warning: 'No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God' (Luke 9:62). 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him' (1 John 2:15).

The brevity is striking—**Remember Lot's wife**—three words containing massive warning. She was so close to salvation but perished on the threshold through divided affection. Her memorial stands as permanent warning: you can escape judgment geographically while remaining attached spiritually, and that attachment will destroy you. Don't look back.

Historical Context

Genesis 19:17 records the angel's command to Lot's family: 'Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.' Lot's wife disobeyed the specific prohibition against looking back. Genesis 19:26 states simply: 'But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.' No elaboration, no explanation—just immediate judgment. Her salt pillar likely stood as visible landmark for years, a monument to the cost of divided loyalty.

Jewish tradition elaborated on her story, but Scripture's silence is eloquent—she's remembered only for her disobedience and destruction. She had every advantage: angelic warning, physical rescue from Sodom, proximity to Lot (a righteous man, 2 Peter 2:7-8), yet perished through attachment to the condemned city. Josephus claimed to have seen her salt pillar in the first century, though this is difficult to verify. What's certain: she serves as perpetual warning that proximity to God's people and knowledge of His judgments don't guarantee salvation if the heart remains attached to this world. Jesus' command—'Remember Lot's wife'—is urgent: learn from her fatal mistake. Don't look back.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What does Lot's wife's destruction despite physical escape from Sodom teach about the necessity of whole-hearted obedience?
2. What 'backward glances' in your life reveal divided affection between God and the world?
3. How does remembering Lot's wife help you evaluate whether you're truly ready to abandon everything for Christ when He returns?

Interlinear Text

μνημονεύετε τῆς γυναικὸς Λώτ

Remember

G3421

G3588

wife

G1135

Lot's

G3091

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 19:26 (Parallel theme): But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

Genesis 19:17 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

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