



SODOM AND GOMORRAH

Genesis 18–19

Many people view God as *either* a God of love *or* a God of wrath. The Bible reveals God in all His fullness, as possessing various attributes, all perfect in nature and perfectly balanced with one another. We get a glimpse of this perfect combination in Genesis 18–19.

If you introduce God as a God of love to the average person, you'll get agreement. Introduce Him as a God of holiness—a God who created and defined sexual relationships—and many people won't want anything to do with God or you.

There's probably not a more disagreeable passage in the Bible to our world today than Genesis 18 and 19—God's judgment upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

But don't mistake God as one who takes pleasure in judgment. Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord . . . is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." God is both a just and holy God and a God of grace and forgiveness.

Genesis 18–19 gives us that kind of balanced, biblical view of God, as we see His character—His attributes—on full display. These chapters not only encourage us to walk with God but also remind us why we need to take a balanced message of repentance and forgiveness to our unbelieving world.

Genesis 18 opens with Abraham sitting at the door of his tent when he sees three men approaching. He invites them to stay for a home-cooked meal. These three men are actually two angels and the Lord, ap-

pearing as ordinary humans. In the Lord's case, this appearance is called a Christophany—a physical, preincarnate form of God the Son.

As they're eating, the Lord asks Abraham, in verse 9, "Where is Sarah your wife?" Abraham answers, "She is in the tent." The Lord knows that, and He also knows Sarah's listening; so, He says, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son" (verse 10).

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Sarah laughs and says to herself, in verse 12, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" The Lord then says to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? . . . Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (verses 13–14).



Sarah comes out of the tent and says, “I did not laugh.” The Lord responds, “No, but you did laugh” (verse 15).

He’s not going to allow her to get away with lying. But He’s also demonstrating that He not only knows her thoughts, but He’s also able to give this ninety-year-old woman and her one-hundred-year-old husband reason to start stocking up on diapers. What is impossible biologically at their age is not impossible by the power of God.

After their meal, Abraham walks along with the Lord and the angels, and Moses records in verse 16 that “they looked down toward Sodom.” Genesis 13:13 has already called the men of Sodom, “great sinners against the Lord,” so we sense God’s holy justice is stirring.

Here in Genesis 18:20, the Lord says, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave.” He isn’t acting on rumors or hearsay but on personal knowledge. He is an eyewitness to every sin.

Listen, the Lord not only knows the sin of these people; He knows your sin and mine. And the truth is, we can justify anything we do. I can convince myself that how I feel and what I’m doing is right. But God operates according to *His* righteousness. *He* defines what is right.

Now in verse 21 the Lord says to Abraham:

“I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know.”

Now didn’t the Lord just read Sarah’s mind? Didn’t God know the sin of these people? Did He need to take a field trip down there to find out? No, this field trip isn’t to inform the Lord but to reassure Abraham that the evidence of Sodom’s sin is undeniable.

So, these two angels are sent ahead, and when they arrive at Sodom in Genesis 19:1, they find Lot sitting at the city gate. The administrative offices of a city

were built just inside the city gate, so Lot apparently holds a position of civil leadership.

Lot thinks these strangers are ordinary men, and he urges them to stay in his home overnight. Later that night, the men of Sodom surround Lot’s house and call out, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them” (verse 5). This verb “to know” is the same verb for a man having relations with his wife.

Lot goes outside and pleads with them in verse 7:

“My brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.”

Frankly, it’s hard to imagine Lot offering his daughters to these men—I wonder if these girls ever forgave him for that. But the men of Sodom aren’t interested in them. Instead, they accuse Lot of standing in judgment over them and their actions, and they begin to attack *him*.

But verses 10–11 tell us the angels pull Lot back inside the house to safety and then supernaturally blind the men outside. Only then do the angels reveal who



The area of Sodom as it looks today



they are and that they've come to rescue Lot and his family from God's coming judgment.

That judgment, as they flee the city, is described in verses 24–26:

Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

God destroys these cities completely, and even Lot's wife loses her life, because she “looked back.” That refers to her lagging behind with a desire to go back. So, she is also judged for her rebellion against God.

God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone is an illustration of a coming day when God will judge all of unbelieving humanity. The truth is, we've all offended a holy God. We've all defied His righteous moral standards. This text isn't just a warning about homosexuality or incest or defiance; it's a warning that judgment is coming and none of us can live before a holy and just God unless someone pays the penalty for our sin.

And that's exactly what Jesus did for you and me; the record of our sins was nailed to His cross, Colossians 2:14 tells us. Jesus paid for your sins and mine. We can escape the holy justice of God—the fire and brimstone of an eternal hell (Revelation 21:8)—only by repenting of our sin and trusting in the Savior.

What happens to Lot and his two daughters? Well, these girls also defy God's pattern for sexual relations. They get their father drunk and lie with him. The final verses of Genesis 19 tell us they both have baby boys, and those boys become the founders of two idolatrous nations, Moab and Ammon. Those nations will become enemies of Israel for generations to come.

But even here, the grace of God is at work. You see, centuries later a woman named Ruth, from the nation of Moab, will turn from her idolatry and by the forgiving grace of God end up marrying an Israelite named Boaz and becoming an ancestor of Jesus the Messiah.

God's invitation is for us to turn from the idols of our sin and walk with Him, a God of justice, holiness, judgment, compassion, grace, and forgiveness.

Let's follow God's holy pattern for living. It's the only pattern that brings satisfaction and meaning and hope.

How does the righteousness of God affect your daily conduct and perspective on the world?

How have you seen God's compassion and grace in the midst of evil and hardship? What did it teach you about God and His ways?

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