



God Judges Sodom and Gomorrah

Genesis 18:16–19:29



LESSON GOAL

Students will learn that God hates and judges sin.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- God hated the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah.
- God judged Sodom and Gomorrah.
- Abraham prayed about Sodom and Gomorrah.
- The Lord rescued Lot from judgment.

KEY VERSE

“And the LORD said, ‘Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see if they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know’” (Genesis 18:20–21).

APPLICATION

- Obey God’s Word and listen to His warnings.
- Turn from your sin before it is too late.

NEXT WEEK

God Sends Baby Isaac
Read Genesis 21.

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Genesis 19 is the sequel to Abraham’s visit from Yahweh and two angels in chapter 18 and the covenant established between the patriarch and God in chapter 17. This passage is a vivid lesson on God’s response to sin. Abraham was to learn it well and teach it to his children, who would become the great nation that God had promised. That Abraham succeeded in doing this is clear from the frequent references to Sodom’s destruction in subsequent passages. The great Dead Sea, much of which probably was created by the cataclysm described in this passage, also stood as a reminder that God judges wickedness.

At the end of chapter 18, the two angels had started toward Sodom while the Lord stayed behind at Hebron to discuss with Abraham Sodom’s impending destruction. By evening the two angels had traveled the 35 miles to Sodom. There they found Lot sitting at the gate, the cultural and commercial hub of the city. In Genesis 13, Lot had first decided to live on the Plain of Sodom; then he had moved to the city itself. Now we find him at the heart of Sodom, probably associating with its leadership. In this chapter and the next, Lot is portrayed as a man of weak character. It is interesting, therefore, that Peter calls him “righteous Lot” (2 Pet. 2:7). The picture that emerges is one of a righteous individual who cannot seem to make a final and definite break from the world’s evil. Lot wanted to do what is right, but he never wholly committed himself to righteousness. He dabbled in moral compromise until it ultimately ruined him. The results of his sins were monumental. He was a good man trying to confront an evil city single-handedly.

The angels had come to evaluate the city and determine the extent of its evil. To that end, they planned to spend the night at “the broad place” (a plaza or marketplace) just inside the city gate. It was not unusual for visitors to a city at this time of year to sleep out in the open air at night, but Lot knew the nature of Sodom’s residents well enough to realize how dangerous such a venture would probably be. He implored the angels to take refuge at his house, where they would be safe. The word “men” is repeatedly used in reference to these angels because their appearance gave no hint of supernatural power. Lot unknowingly entertained angels, naively thinking that they, who would destroy the whole city the next day, needed his protection. His motives were noble. Lot’s uncle Abraham had previously given him many sheep; it probably was from his own flocks that the lamb was obtained for the feast given in honor of his guests.

Through their satanic religion, the wicked Sodomites had come to worship their own bodies. The best description of these people is found not in Genesis, but in Romans 1:18, 28–30: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, mali-

Additional Reference Materials

*Keil and Delitzch
Commentary on the Old
Testament* by C. F. Keil
and F. Delitzch

*The MacArthur Study
Bible* by John MacArthur

*Paradise to Prison:
Studies in Genesis* by
John J. Davis

sciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful.”

It undoubtedly was the Sodomites’ intention to use the strangers for their own evil purposes and then kill them. Because of their religion, they were fascinated with the cycle of life and death. From young people to the oldest members of the community (who, because of the longer life expectancy, may have been well over 100 years old), everyone joined in this evil game.

Hospitality was, in those times, considered a sacred trust. A man’s credibility and reputation depended on his faithfulness in protecting and providing for the welfare of his guests. However, we cannot help but feel shocked to realize that Lot was willing to sacrifice his own daughters to protect his visitors. Morality in Sodom was so perverted and twisted that Lot called his debauched neighbors “brethren” and offered to sacrifice to them the children he should have loved.

In their hysterical and frustrated lust, the Sodomites turned on Lot. This foreigner had become the community conscience, and because his uncle had rescued them (Genesis 14), they had put up with his attempts to sensitize their spirits for some time. But they would hold their peace no longer. They complained that he had developed the habit of acting like a judge. In fact, 2 Peter 2:8 says this: “For that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds.” Lot had upheld a righteous standard, which must have irritated the Sodomites to madness; unfortunately, being removed from the company of other righteous men such as Abraham, he could not indefinitely continue to uphold that standard. He had even allowed two of his daughters to marry the evil Sodomites.

Note: When we get too close to evil and cut ourselves off from spiritual resources, the evil begins to take its toll on our own sensitivity to sin.

By now the angels had made their evaluation of Sodom and had found it wanting; judgment was about to begin. They opened the door, pulled Lot in to safety, and blinded the men outside. With this act, it immediately became apparent to Lot that these “men” actually were angels.

The wheels of judgment were set in rapid motion, and Lot was invited to take his family out of the city. The most distant relatives who would be permitted to escape and survive were Lot’s sons-in-law. The plan was clearly articulated: Yahweh no longer could permit such vile sinfulness to continue, so He was about to destroy the city through these two angels.

Lot went to his family members’ houses to warn them of the impending disaster, but they did not heed his warning. Undoubtedly, Lot was depressed and frightened as he returned home, knowing that his family’s disbelief was about to cost them their lives, wondering how he could explain to his wife that he probably would have to leave without every member of the family. Moreover, he would have to leave behind his cattle, his house, and most of their possessions to be destroyed. Lot’s little compromises with the world were about to cost him everything he owned.

Even at this time, the major crisis point of his life, Lot could not make a clean break from the world. Instead of running for safety, he waited around the house that night until the angels eventually had to force him to escape, along with his wife and two unmarried daughters.

They were instructed to flee to the mountains, not to look back at Sodom or go to another city on the Plain of Jordan (called “The Round”). Otherwise, they would be destroyed. Our amazement at Lot’s audacity is surpassed only by our admira-

tion for the angels' (and the Lord's) patience. Possibly as a result of the dissipation that follows self-indulgence, or possibly because he had attempted to carry along some of his possessions, Lot pleaded that he could not run fast enough to reach the mountains in time to escape the impending disaster. His plea in verses 18 to 20 seems to be addressed at times to one angel and at other times to both angels (based on the different personal pronouns used). Possibly this reveals the fear he felt.

Lot requested that he be allowed to flee to a small nearby village named Bela, one of the five cities of Pentapolis in the valley of Siddem (which also included Sodom, Gomorrah, Adamah, and Seboiim). His request was based on its size—it was small. Because Lot repeated that it was a small town, the angels renamed it Zoar, the derivative of a Hebrew word meaning “tiny place.”

There is an abrupt and dramatic transition in verse 23. We are shown a calm and beautiful sunrise. No doubt the inhabitants of Sodom were still asleep after their debauchery the night before. Lot was approaching Zoar. Suddenly God rained fire and sulphur (“brimstone”) from heaven.

There has been a great deal of speculation about what actually destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Some people have proposed that a volcano erupted and poured molten lava down on the cities of the valley. However, there is no trace of hardened lava in this vicinity. Others have theorized that lightning ignited the heavy sulphur deposits on the ground and that these burning substances were thrown high into the air so that they rained down on the valley.

However, the words “the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah” make any explanation that minimizes divine, miraculous intervention unsatisfying. What we can state with certainty is that fire fell from the sky and destroyed all life—every human, every animal, and every weed or blade of grass. Four of the five cities of the Pentapolis were destroyed, Zoar alone being spared. Beyond those facts, we can only speculate.

Lot's wife must have followed behind him. In Luke 17:32 Jesus implied that she was unable to free her mind from thoughts about the things she had left behind. She looked back toward Sodom and died. Commentators theorize that poisonous fumes or the blast of the explosions killed her. Again, however, such natural explanations fail to satisfy, and we are forced to simply assume that she was supernaturally judged and punished for disobeying the command not to look back. Lot and his daughters probably were unaware of her fate at the time because they too were forbidden to look back. When the catastrophe was over, however, they must have returned to find that her body had been encrusted with salt. The Hebrew wording here indicates that she “became” salt, which does not necessarily indicate an instantaneous transformation. The salt content in the air of this region naturally attached itself to any object left outside. Probably the salt had formed on her clothing and her features, preserving her body in its dying form until she could be buried.

In the latter part of this chapter, Lot's daughters (his only remaining possessions from Sodom) brought shame upon themselves and their father. Lot felt compelled to hide himself and his daughters in a cave, rejected by all other people. He had lost everything. It was there that the girls repeated some of the identical sins they had become so familiar with in Sodom. We know nothing more of Lot's life. It is lost to history. Not even his death is recorded.

We have, thus, the tragic story of a man whose hesitancy to divorce himself from an evil world brought ruin on both him and his posterity.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth”
(Psalm 78:1).*

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

What promise did God give to Abram?

*God promised Abram a son whose descendants would become a great nation.
Those descendants would number more than the stars in the sky.*

How did Abram and Sarai try to help God with His promise?

Sarai suggested that Abram marry Hagar and have a son with her.

What happened in Abram’s family when Abram married Hagar and found out that she was going to have a baby?

Hagar was rude to Sarai, and Sarai was mean to Hagar.

Why did Sarah laugh when the angel promised her a son?

Abram and Sarai were too old to have children.

Does God always keep His promises?

Yes.



What Is Sin?

Before beginning the lesson, ask the students to tell you what sin is. Their answers may include doing wrong, disobeying parents, lying, cheating, or stealing. Explain to the students that there was a city where people were sinning in all those ways and more, and that there was only one man in the city who remembered God.



City Neighborhoods

Lay down masking-tape “roads” around the classroom. Give students small cars and trucks to drive around the “neighborhoods.” Stop at street signs and stoplights. It is important to obey traffic rules. Talk about the names of streets in your town. If the students know their own street names, pretend that you are on those streets. Talk about people who live in those neighborhoods. Sodom was a real city with real people. After the students have talked about cities and what you see along city streets, give each student a copy of the “Our City Streets” picture at the back of this lesson. Provide magazines for older students to cut out pictures of people and glue them in their own “city.” Younger students will need the pictures cut out before class. Help the students count the people in their “city.” Let them count the people in someone else’s “city.” In the Bible lesson today, we will hear about the people in the city of Sodom. Abraham prayed for the city of Sodom.



3
4

Talking to God

Bring several telephones to class, and let the students pretend to talk on them. They can call their friends and relatives. Explain to the students that prayer is talking to God. Draw a simple outline of a telephone on cardstock for the students to color. Cut out the telephones. Punch two holes in the telephones, one at each upper corner and string yarn through each hole. Make the string long enough to make a necklace. Print out labels that say, "I will talk to God in prayer." Glue the label onto the telephone. Hang the crafts around the students' necks as a reminder to talk to God just as they talk to their friends or family. In today's lesson, they will learn that Abraham talked to God, and God was listening!



Total Destruction

Build a large city with blocks. Explain to the students that today's lesson is about Sodom and Gomorrah, wicked and sinful cities that God destroyed. To illustrate this total destruction, tell the students to imagine that your block city is Sodom and Gomorrah. Then dramatically sweep all the blocks off the table. (Make sure the students are far enough away from the table that they don't get hit with any flying blocks.)

Variation One: Before class, draw a beautiful city on a chalkboard or dry-erase board. Include buildings, trees, plants, and people. Talk about the great cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and talk about God sending fire and brimstone to destroy everything. Then erase the whole city.

Variation Two: Give each student an eraser and a simple, light pencil sketch of a city. Have them erase every mark on their papers until nothing is left.



Way of Escape

Clear the center of the classroom, and play a game of tag with the students. Place the tagged students in the corner. At the end of the game, provide a way of escape for the students in the corner. Explain that in today's lesson, God prepares a way of escape for those who believe in Him.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done" (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Reading of the Text

Read Genesis 18:16–19:29.

God sent angels to tell Abraham and Sarah that they would have a baby son very soon. They knew that only God could keep a promise to give them a son when they were 90 and 100 years old. Then it was time for the angels to leave Abraham.

They had an important job to do for God. It was a sad job.

One of the angels, who was the Lord Jesus, said to Abraham, "God is going to punish Sodom. We hear crying out all day and all night. Everyone in the city is bad all day long. We're going down now to see how bad things are." Abraham remembered his nephew Lot, who lived in Sodom. Abraham loved his nephew very much. Lot was a good man. Surely there were other good men in Sodom. Abraham said to the Lord, "You would not destroy good men along with the bad men, would you? Will you save the city if there are 50 good and righteous men living there?" The Lord said, "Yes, if there are 50 good and righteous men, I will save the city."

Abraham wanted to make sure that Lot was safe. He said to the Lord, "Will you save the city if there are only 40 good and righteous men?" The Lord said, "I will not destroy the city of Sodom if I find 40 good and righteous men who love and obey Me."

Abraham was still concerned. He asked the Lord whether He would save the city for 30 righteous people, then 20 righteous people, and finally he said to the Lord, "Don't be angry if I ask you one more time. What if there are only 10 good and righteous men in the city? Will you save the city for 10 people?" The Lord answered, "I will not destroy Sodom if there are 10 good and righteous men in the city." Abraham was talking to the Lord about his nephew. Talking to God is called praying.

Abraham was asking the Lord, "Will you please take care of Lot and his family?" God would answer Abraham's prayer for Lot. God always answers the prayers of His children who love and obey Him. God may not answer exactly as we want Him to, but His ways are always best, and He always answers. Two of the angels walked to Sodom and saw Lot sitting by the city gate. Lot was a judge in the city and had an important position. Lot said to the two strangers, "Hello, strangers, please come to my house and stay for the night." The angels said, "Thank you, but we'll just camp out here in the town square tonight." Lot knew what the bad people of Sodom would do to the strangers. He said to them, "You are not safe in the city at night. You must stay at my house."

The angels went to Lot's house and ate dinner with him. When it was bedtime, there came a knock at Lot's door. Lot opened the door and went outside. Young and old men from all over the city of Sodom were standing there in the street. One of the men said to Lot, "Send out the two strangers to us." Lot knew that the men wanted to hurt the strangers, so he said, "No, I won't let them come out to you." The men of Sodom were angry with Lot and sneered, "Who do you think you are? You think you're so good and righteous. If you don't send the strangers out, we will hurt you, too."

Lot realized how wicked the men of Sodom really were, but it was too late. Lot was afraid of the wicked men and wanted to get back into the house, but the men were pushing against him. There were too many men, and there was nothing he could do.

The angels had power from God, and they pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door, just in time. The angels blinded the wicked men's eyes so they couldn't see to find the door. Finally, they all went back to their houses. The angels said to Lot, "We see the wickedness of Sodom. God is going to punish the wicked men of the city. You will be safe if you take your wife and daughters and leave town as soon as it is morning."

In the morning, as soon as it was light, the angels took Lot, his wife, and his daughters by the hands and pulled them away from their home. One angel said, "Run to the mountains, quick! Don't look back and don't stop! God will keep you safe if you don't look back!" Lot was afraid, but he and his daughters obeyed and ran as fast as they could. Lot's wife did not obey. She looked back and did not run to safety. She became a pillar of salt in the desert.

God punished the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah that day. He sent fire down from the sky to burn the cities. The houses burned, the grass burned, and the crops burned. There was only one man who obeyed God and left Sodom. He lost everything, even his wife, but God kept Lot and his daughters safe.

When Abraham got up the next morning and looked toward Sodom, he saw smoke covering the whole region where the cities had been located. Abraham knew that there had not been even 10 good and righteous men in Sodom. What a wicked city! Abraham wondered whether his nephew Lot and his family were safe. Abraham knew that God answers prayers and would do the best thing for Lot.



Lesson Questions

Why was God going to punish the people of Sodom?

The people were selfish and wicked.

Why did Abraham ask the angel of the Lord to save the righteous people of Sodom?

Abraham's nephew, Lot, and his family were living in Sodom. Abraham asked the Lord to save them.

What happened to the angels when they went to Sodom?

The wicked men of Sodom wanted to hurt the angels, but the angels made their eyes blind so they couldn't find the door.

What happened to Lot and his family the next morning?

The angels took Lot and his family out of Sodom. Lot's wife disobeyed God, looked back, and turned into a pillar of salt.

How did God punish Sodom?

God sent fire from the sky and burned houses, crops, and people.

Did God answer Abraham's prayer for Lot?

Yes.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use the appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



God's Patience

Before beginning the lesson, set a kitchen timer for three minutes. Ask the students whether they think that God is patient. Explain that in today's lesson, they will learn about how time ran out for sinful Sodom and Gomorrah.



4
5

Countdown

Show the class a large container full of colored beads. (Take out all the yellow beads before class.) Let them look at it during class, but don't open it. After reading Abraham's conversation with God about finding righteous people in Sodom, ask the students

whether they can find 50 yellow beads in the container. Then ask whether they can find just 45, then 40, then 30, then 20, and finally 10. Then dump the beads out on the floor, and let the students look for yellow beads. After they see that there are no yellow beads, explain to them that God could not find 10 righteous people in Sodom.

Praise and Worship

Create in Me a Clean Heart

God Is So Good (God Answers Prayer)

Mighty Is Our God

Oh, Be Careful

The Wise Man and the Foolish Man

Trust and Obey



A Wicked City

God looked down on a wicked land.

(Hold hand to eyes and shake head back and forth.)

To destroy the cities was His plan.

(Clap hands together dramatically.)

Two angels came and they met Lot.

(Hold up two fingers on one hand, then one finger on the opposite hand.)

Then wicked men surrounded the spot.

(Intertwine fingers and make a circle with arms.)

God did judge; it was the people's fault.

(Nod head.)

Lot's wife looked back and turned to salt.

(Look backward and then stand stiffly.)



Escape from Sodom

Lot had to leave Sodom in a hurry. In this game, students will pretend to escape from Sodom. Use masking tape to form a maze or path on the floor. Line students up on one side of the maze. Use a kitchen timer as a countdown timer. When you say "go," the students must walk through the maze one at a time, without going outside the maze lines. They must do this before the timer goes off. Do this until everyone gets through the maze.

Variation: As students go through the maze, try to distract them and make them look back. Any student who looks back forces the whole team to start over. In today's lesson, we learned how Lot was slow to obey the warning of the angels. God was still merciful to get him and his family out of the city in time.



Pillar of Salt

Give each student glue, salt, and a sheet of white paper. Have students draw an outline of Lot's wife on the paper. Then trace the outline with tacky glue, filling in the open spaces. Next, sprinkle salt over the outline, carefully shifting the salt across the paper and disposing of the excess. Discuss Lot's wife's sin, the importance of obedience, and the consequences of disobedience. Ask students about

times when they've disobeyed. What were the consequences of that disobedience?

Variation: Use the coloring sheet at the back of the lesson, and place glue on the drawing of Lot's wife. Follow the same directions as above.

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



Freeze Tag Game

Select one child to be Abraham and one to be "Disobedient Don" (or "Disobedient Dawn"). Bring two different hats to distinguish these students from the rest of the class. When Abraham touches a person, that person gets to stay in the game. If Disobedient Don touches a person, that person is out and has to sit in Sodom!



Prayer Reminder Door Hanger

Before class, cut 8.5 x 11-inch pieces of cardstock in half vertically. Each student will need one half-sheet of cardstock. Cut out a circle slightly larger than a door-knob so the students can hang these papers on their doors at home. Then make square cutouts of the following songs (the students will glue these onto their door-knob hangers):

Talk to God (tune: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"): Talk, Talk, Talk to God. He will hear your prayer. He will always answer you. That's because He cares.

Pray Anywhere (tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"): Here or there or anywhere, You can talk to God in prayer. When you're happy or you're blue, He will always answer you. Here or there or anywhere, You can talk to God in prayer.

During craft time, trace the students' hands on each side of the cardstock. Have the students glue one song on each hand outline. Let them color their door hangers and decorate them with cereal, beans, pasta, sequins, stickers, etc., being very careful to supervise the younger students when using small decorating items. While they are working on the craft, teach them the songs "Talk to God" and "Pray Anywhere."



Build a City

Let students glue pieces of torn paper sacks on a piece of paper to form houses and buildings. When their cities are done, the students can add torn orange paper flames to their pictures as a reminder that God punished the wicked city of Sodom. Talk about how Abraham cared about the city and his nephew Lot and asked God to take care of the righteous people in Sodom.

Coloring Sheets

Give each child a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of this lesson. The students can color the pictures in class or take them home to color.



MEMORY VERSE

"And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6).

Our City Streets



**Our city is not like the city of Sodom, where Lot lived.
Draw or glue on pictures of things we see on our city streets.**



The wicked men of Sodom wanted to hurt Lot, but the angels struck them with blindness (Gen. 19:11).



Lot's wife disobeyed and looked back while the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24–39).

