



11

Sodom and Gomorrah

Key Themes

- God judges sin.
- God is merciful toward sinners.

Key Passages

- Genesis 18:23–33, 19:15–17, 19:23–26

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize that God’s justice demands a punishment for sin.
- Describe God’s mercy to Lot and to us.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

page 5

Students will decipher a “Backward Message” relating to the lesson.



Activity 1: Abraham Pleads for Sodom

page 5

Students will read part of today’s Scripture from a script. You will ask them questions, and they will circle the answers on the script.



Studying God’s Word

page 5

The Lord and two angels appeared to Abraham and announced the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah because of the sin and wickedness God saw there. Abraham pleaded not only for the cities but for his nephew Lot. God must punish sin, but He had mercy on Lot and his family.



Activity 2: Justice and Mercy

page 10

Students will evaluate a variety of situations and consider how God demonstrated justice and mercy.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Print one Backward Message worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Backward Message worksheet for each student



ABRAHAM PLEADS FOR SODOM

- Print one Abraham Pleads for Sodom script from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Abraham Pleads for Sodom script for each student



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print one Cities of the Plain map from the Resource DVD-ROM.

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Cities of the Plain map
- Sticky notes



JUSTICE AND MERCY

- Print and cut out the Justice and Mercy cards from the Resource DVD-ROM, enough so that each student will get at least one card. Keep the teacher's guide for your own use.

- Justice and Mercy cards
- Justice and Mercy teacher's guide



Memory Verse

Acts 17:26–27 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.

► **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

To prepare your heart and mind for this week's lesson, read Genesis 18:1–2, 18:16–33, 19:1–29; Luke 17:28–30.

The journey of Abram to Canaan is one wrought with detours and adventure. The Lord told Abram to leave the land of his family and settle in a land the Lord would show him. Abram was to be the head of a great nation, a blessing to many, and his name would be great (Genesis 12:1–3). Abram listened and obeyed and left the land of Ur. God tells us that Lot, Abram's nephew, was part of the company of travelers from the beginning of the journey. After settling first in Haran (Genesis 11:31) they proceeded at the Lord's call to Canaan. Then there was another detour to Egypt because of a famine (Genesis 12:10). Through all of their wanderings, the Lord continued to increase their livestock and the land they traversed was no longer sufficient to support Abram, Lot, and all of their possessions (Genesis 13:5–7). This is when uncle and nephew parted ways. Abram to the land of Canaan and Lot to the cities of the plain—where sin and wickedness prevailed against the Lord (Genesis 13:12–13).

God's justice demands punishment for sin and wickedness, and He was soon to providentially bring an end to the sin that permeated Sodom and Gomorrah. In a meeting between Abraham, the Angel of the Lord (Jesus), and two angels, the Lord confirmed that Abraham and Sarah would bear a son (Genesis 18:14). He also revealed the plan to destroy the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20–21).

Abraham pleaded with the Lord to spare the city. However, God must punish sin; His justice demands that He punish those who turn from Him in wickedness. And there were fewer than ten righteous in the city (Genesis 18:32). This account illustrates just how wicked men can be. Lot, too, had succumbed to the evil influence of the city as demonstrated when he offered his own daughters to the men of the city to satisfy their lusts and protect the angels (Genesis 19:6–8).

But God is also merciful. And His mercy was shown to Lot and his daughters. In spite of their own sinfulness, they were spared from the destruction of the city (Genesis 19:16).

This account is tragic. The sin of man is great and God's judgment is to be feared—and not taken lightly. Lot's wife did not learn that lesson. And it was only moments after she was mercifully spared death in the

city that she again blatantly disobeyed God during the escape—when she looked back at the destruction behind her (Genesis 19:17). For this she was judged and turned into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26).

The terrible destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is an event referred to throughout Scripture to demonstrate the severity of God's judgment: Deuteronomy 29:23; Isaiah 1:9, 13:19; Jeremiah 50:40; Lamentations 4:6; Amos 4:11; Zephaniah 2:9; Matthew 10:15; Mark 6:11; Luke 17:28–29; Romans 9:29; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 1:7.

And yet God also revealed His mercy—by sparing Lot and his daughters. This is the mercy He provides to all sinners who in faith and repentance accept His forgiveness and turn to Jesus Christ.

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

There are many who cannot believe that this account could possibly be true. What can we say to those blinded to the truth? First of all, the fact that this event is referenced so many times throughout Scripture (see above for list) verifies that there was never any doubt by these writers that this event occurred just as it was recorded.

We know that those who do not rely on the authority of God's Word resort to relying on man's "evidence." And there was no historical or archaeological evidence to corroborate the biblical account—until recently.

It is clear from various biblical passages that Sodom and Gomorrah should be located in the Dead Sea region. When Abraham and his nephew Lot parted ways (Genesis 13:8–13), Lot chose to settle in the Jordan valley "in the direction of Zoar" and moved his tents to "the cities of the plain" as far as Sodom. According to Genesis 14, the cities of the plain, which include Sodom, Gomorrah, Zoar, Zeboiim, and Admah, joined forces to battle a coalition of Mesopotamian kings in the "Valley of Siddim" (Genesis 14:8)—that is, the Salt Sea. This is referring to the Dead Sea region.

Between 1973 and 1979 two archaeologists surveyed an area southeast of the Dead Sea and located the remains of five cities. From North to South the cities are Bab Edh-Dhra (first discovered in 1924), Numeira, Safi, Feifa, and Khanazir. Could these be the five "cities of the plain" identified in Genesis?

The most remarkable feature of Bab Edh-Dhra is the number of graves. An estimated 20,000 tombs are located on the site. These family tombs held approximately half a million people with over 3 million pottery

vessels. This was clearly a well-populated area in the past, and may well be the ancient city of Sodom.

The excavation of the city of Numeira exposed that this entire area was covered by the ashy debris of its final destruction, up to 16 inches in depth. This, coupled with the fact that the Arabic name for this city has similar consonants as the Hebrew name for Gomorrah, led biblical archaeologists to conclude that this could be the city of Gomorrah.

“Proof” is not necessary to verify God’s Word. In fact, what more do we need than the very word of the one who ordained and accomplished this historical account. However, God allows for these confirmations so that we will be better equipped to defend our faith and the Bible against the skeptics who attempt to dishonor and discredit it.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The biblical narratives of this time period in terms of customs, laws, legal agreements, and family arrangements fit well with what we know from historical records left by other societies of the Middle East, such as the Amorites, Sumerians, and Akkadians.

During this particular period in history in the Middle East, the role of the patriarch in family life was very important. Family structure included three levels: tribe, family, and household (Joshua 7:14). The fundamental societal unit of the household included a patriarch, his wife, his sons and their wives, his grandchildren, and other dependents. These households often lived in a compound, with houses around a central courtyard, encircled by a low wall.

Abraham, as patriarch of his household, was

responsible for the economic support, religious well-being, and safety of his entire household (Genesis 14:13–16). In Genesis 18 we see Abraham, as the patriarch, fulfilling his hospitality obligations to protect and care for sojourners or aliens, too (Leviticus 19:33–34). Hospitality was one of the most highly regarded virtues of the ancient world, and still is in many societies of the Middle East. Abraham showed his guests great honor by preparing them a meal.

Again, as we compare the history book of the universe with secular historical accounts, we gain confirmation and confidence that God’s Word is true.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Dear Lord, you are truly a God to be feared. You must punish all sin and your punishment is serious as demonstrated in this account of Sodom and Gomorrah. I marvel at your patience with the world today. You are mocked, ignored, cursed, and blasphemed by so many—yet you wait patiently. And you continue to offer a way for sinners to be reconciled to you. Help my students to see the gravity of their own sinfulness against you. And give me wisdom, Lord, to clearly explain the mercy and forgiveness you offer through Jesus Christ. Open their eyes to see that you alone can offer forgiveness—and you have done that through Jesus Christ.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- Distribute the Backward Message worksheets for students to decipher.

To make it more exciting and engaging for the class, you may want to have your students compete by setting up teams—with girls against boys, blondes against brunettes, etc. Time them to see who can figure the message out first.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme posters from previous weeks, quickly review the lessons with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you review the Lesson Theme posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



Abraham Pleads for Sodom

MATERIALS

- Abraham Pleads for Sodom script for each student
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Pass out the Abraham Pleads for Sodom scripts before proceeding with the class. The students will read the passage from the scripts and circle the answers to questions as you study the passage.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

We will see as we read and study this passage, that God must judge sin. At the same time, He was and still is merciful. Unfortunately, in spite of Abraham's hopes, Sodom and Gomorrah were so wicked, that God could not spare them.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Before we get started reading, let me give you a little background. First of all, when Abraham left his hometown of Ur, he took his family, including his wife Sarah and nephew Lot, and all of his possessions. As they traveled, the Lord continued to bless them by increasing their livestock. There came a time when Abraham and Lot had to part ways because their herds were so great, the land could not support them. Abraham allowed Lot to choose

the land he wanted. So Lot chose to live in the comfortable cities of the east. He took all of his animals, herdsmen, possessions, and tents and separated from Abraham. Abraham remained in the countryside of Canaan.

One day, Abraham and Sarah had some very special visitors. The Lord came to see them, and He brought two angels with Him! The angels and the Lord appeared to Abraham as men. The Lord told Abraham that He had seen that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were extremely wicked. Their sin was so great that the Lord was going to judge the sin by destroying the cities and all the people in them.

This is where we are going to pick it up—at Genesis 18:23–33. I need three volunteers to read this script and I want the rest of you to follow along. I'll be asking questions and will want you to circle the answers on your scripts as we answer them. *Pass out the Genesis 18:23–33 scripts to all the students. Choose volunteers to read the three parts.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Refer to the Bible Study poster to remind your students how to dig deeper into God's Word by asking the right questions.

Observe the Text

- ? **First of all, who are the characters in these verses?** *Genesis 18:23, 18:26. The Lord and Abraham.*

The Lord told Abraham His plan to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

- ? **Someone read Genesis 18:25 again. In your own words, what was Abraham's reaction?** *He was hoping that the Lord would spare the cities. Abraham hoped the Lord wouldn't destroy the righteous at the same time He was destroying the wicked.*

- ? **What does Abraham mean by righteous people?** *Allow for answers.*

He was referring to the people in the cities who feared God, loved Him, trusted Him, and were obedient to Him.

- ? **What did Abraham ask in Genesis 18:24?** *What if there are fifty righteous will you destroy it? Circle fifty on your scripts.*

That's right. Abraham thought surely the Lord would save the cities if there were fifty good people.

- ? **What did the Lord say? Genesis 18:26.** *If there are fifty righteous, I will spare the city. Circle the Lord's answer.*

- ? **Continue to read down the script. What did Abraham continue to do as He asked God for mercy on the cities?** *He kept lowering the number of righteous that God might spare.*

? So tell me, which numbers did he bring up to the Lord after fifty? *Genesis 18:28—forty-five; Genesis 18:29—forty; Genesis 18:30—thirty; Genesis 18:31—twenty; Genesis 18:32—ten. Have the students circle the numbers on their scripts.*

? What was the Lord’s response each time? *I will not do it for the sake of (number). Genesis 18:26—fifty; Genesis 18:28—forty-five; Genesis 18:29—forty; Genesis 18:30—thirty; Genesis 18:31—twenty; Genesis 18:32—ten. Have the students circle the answers on their scripts.*

Discover the Truth

Well, that is pretty interesting. Abraham humbly implored the Lord to spare Sodom and Gomorrah, if He could find fifty righteous people in them. And before the Lord even left him, he was down to ten. Abraham asked, “What if ten people are righteous in the city, will you spare it?” Abraham’s nephew Lot and his family lived in Sodom and Gomorrah, and Abraham wanted the Lord to spare the cities and spare his nephew.

However, I don’t think that Abraham thought there would be very many righteous people in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. That’s why he kept lowering the number. He knew how wicked the cities were, and he didn’t want everyone to be destroyed.

The Lord also knew about all their wickedness, and He had come to destroy them. There comes a time when the Lord must judge sin. He is very patient and gives us time to repent of our sins. But He will judge those who continue to sin and ignore Him.

Remember when Adam and Eve sinned? He judged them by sending them out of the garden. When the people of Noah’s day sinned, God flooded the earth and everyone but Noah and his family died in the Flood. And when the people at Babel sinned, God confused their language and scattered them all over the earth. *Refer to the Seven C’s Timeline to review these judgments from the Lord.*

? So, let’s see what happens now—with Sodom and Gomorrah! Do you think the Lord will find 10 righteous people? *Allow guesses. Answer will be revealed later.*



READ THE WORD

Now turn in your Bibles to Genesis 19. We’ll continue there. The Bible says the two angels who visited Abraham with the Lord went into Sodom and Gomorrah. They were disguised as men. Abraham’s nephew Lot met them, and he urged the angels to stay with him. Remember, the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were very great. And the angels told Lot and his family that they must run from the city because God was going to judge it and all the wicked people who lived there. Let’s see what happens.

Someone read Genesis 19:15–17. *Choose a volunteer to read.*

Genesis 19:15–17

Now, someone read Genesis 19:23–26. *Choose a volunteer to read.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Let's ask some questions and see what God's Word is saying to us.

Observe the Text

- ? What did the angels tell Lot to do in Genesis 19:15? *Hurry, take your daughters and go.*
- ? Why were they to run? What was going to happen? *Genesis 18:15. The people in the cities were going to be consumed by the punishment.*
- ? What does the word "consumed" mean here? The angels said go or you will be consumed in the punishment. *Allow for answers.*

Consumed:
destroyed

Consumed means destroyed—the angels were telling Lot to hurry, so he and his family would be spared the punishment God was bringing.

- ? What is happening in Genesis 19:16? *Lot and his daughters were taking their time—lingering. The angels took their hands and brought them out of the city.*
- ? What attribute of God do you see being displayed in Genesis 19:16? It tells you right in the verse. *Allow answers.*
- ? God was showing His mercy. Now, what does that mean—merciful? Take a look at the Attributes of God poster if you don't know. *Kind to those in misery, distress, or suffering.*
- ? What directions did the angel give Lot and his family, once he got them out of the city, Genesis 19:17? *Escape for your life; do not look behind you; escape to the mountains.*
- ? Did you notice what time of day this was? In Genesis 19:23. *Morning—the sun had risen.*

MERCIFUL
(Refer to Attributes poster)

Brimstone: a type of rock that catches on fire easily

- ? And How did the Lord destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? *Genesis 19:24. With brimstone and fire from heaven.*

- ? What is brimstone? Anyone know? *Allow for answers.*

Brimstone is like a rock that catches on fire really easily. So when the Lord sent the fire and the brimstone down from the sky, you can just imagine the destruction it brought. The Lord meant business!

- ? What does Genesis 19:25 tell us was destroyed? *The plain, the inhabitants, and what grew on the ground.*

Inhabitants:
residents, people

- ? What does "inhabitants" mean? *Allow for answers.*

Inhabitants means all the people who were still living in those cities. They were all destroyed by the fire and the brimstone.

- ? What was Lot's wife's reaction? What did she do according to Genesis 19:26? *She looked back.*

- ? Yes, she did. And what happened to her? *She became a pillar of salt.*

? Now, why do you think God did that to her? Look back in Genesis 19:17.
The angels told them not to look back.

That's right. The angels gave them specific directions. Lot's wife did not obey. She looked back. And for that, she was destroyed—turned into a pillar of salt.

Discover the Truth

? Well, now we have all the information we need to answer the question we had earlier. Was God able to find just ten righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah? *No.*

Sadly, no. That should give us an indication of just how bad things were in those cities.

? How did God judge Sodom and Gomorrah? *With fire and brimstone that rained down from heaven.*

? Why did God do that? *Because of their sin. The people were wicked.*

That's right. Sodom and Gomorrah—and three other cities in the plain—were destroyed by fire and brimstone, burned up completely. And everyone who lived there was destroyed with the city.

Wouldn't you think that in the midst of that judgment, Lot's family would have been thinking that they were never going to disobey God ever again? But instead, we see Lot's wife directly disobeying the angels' instruction not to look back.

? What happened to her? *She was turned to a pillar of salt.*

God is holy. Because He is holy, He must punish sin. And although God is also patient when it comes to our sin, He will eventually judge all people. That's what He did to Sodom and Gomorrah. I'd like for you to take a look at the Attributes of God poster for a minute. God reveals several of His attributes in this account, doesn't He?

? What do I mean when I say God is holy? *He cannot sin and hates all sin.*

? What do I mean when I say God is just? *He is fair according to who He is; He must punish sin.*

? What do I mean when I say God is omnipotent? *He is all-powerful to do whatever He wants.*

That's right. All of these attributes of God can be seen in the biblical account of Sodom and Gomorrah. God is holy, God is just, and God is omnipotent. Because He hated the sins of the people living in Sodom and Gomorrah, He punished them. He showed His amazing power by sending fire and brimstone from the sky to destroy the cities completely!



HOLY
JUST
OMNIPOTENT
(Refer to Attributes poster.)



Justice and Mercy

MATERIALS

- Justice and Mercy cards (at least one card for each student)
- Justice and Mercy teacher's guide

INSTRUCTIONS

Pass the 12 cards out to the students. Read the biblical account/situation from the Justice and Mercy teacher's guide. Each account will demand God's justice of death and eternal separation from God. God's mercy will look different depending on the account.

Ask the students what the person(s) deserves according to God's justice. They will read them, saying, "Death and eternal separation from God."

Then ask them how God demonstrated His mercy in that situation. Have the student who has the right card, read it to the class.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

- ? So, what attribute was God demonstrating when He brought fire and brimstone to everyone who lived in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? *Justice.*

- ? What attribute was God demonstrating when He sent the angels to Sodom to save Lot from the punishment that was coming?

Mercy.

These accounts bring home to us what we all really deserve because the Bible says we are all sinners. We deserve God's justice. God hates sin—all sin and every sin—because He is holy.

- ? Because of that, what does God have to do to sinners? What does His justice look like?

Death and eternal separation from God.

- ? Right. But He also shows us His mercy. How did He show us His mercy? *Allow discussion.*

God sent Jesus Christ to take the punishment for the sins of all who would repent of their sins, turn away from their sins, and trust Jesus as Savior and Lord of their life. Whoever does that is assured of eternal life and a relationship with God. That is real mercy!



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

We learned a lot about God in this lesson. One of the important truths is that God has to judge sin; He can't just let it go. As we've studied the Bible, we've seen many examples of God judging sin. Haven't we?

- ? What are the examples of God's judgments we just went over? *He judged Adam and Eve for their sin by sending them out of the garden; He judged the people of Noah's day when He flooded the earth and everyone but Noah and his family died; He judged the people at Babel when He confused their language and scattered them all over the earth.*

In today's lesson about Sodom and Gomorrah, we saw God's justice again. Sodom and Gomorrah were cities full of wicked people who were living in rebellion against God. And God judged their sin.

? But, remember, God also showed His mercy. In what ways did He show mercy? *He sent His angels to the city to warn Abraham's nephew Lot. Not only did the angels warn them, but they took them by the hands and brought them safely out of the city.*

God has also offered us His mercy. We deserve God's punishment because we are sinners, no better than the people in Sodom and Gomorrah. God does not take sin lightly, does He? We are all accountable for our sins. Eventually, God will judge every person.

But God is also merciful. God became a man, Jesus. He came to earth and never sinned. He lived a perfect life. He was crucified, even though He had done nothing wrong. And He did that so we would have a way to be forgiven. Jesus said that whoever would believe in Him—that means believe that He lived, died, and rose from the grave—would be saved from God's judgment. He took the punishment for the sins of all who would turn away from their sins and put their trust in Jesus. God's justice is satisfied through Jesus for all who believe. That is the ultimate example of God's mercy.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

There are many who don't believe this account about Sodom and Gomorrah. What can we say to those blinded to the truth of God's Word? First of all, you should know that this event is referred to at least 13 different times in the Bible—in both the Old and New Testaments. This confirms to us that the writers of the Bible believed this event occurred just as it was recorded.

We know that those who do not rely on the authority of God's Word resort to relying on man's "evidence." And there was no historical or archaeological evidence to support the biblical account—until recently.

The location of Sodom and Gomorrah, based on various biblical passages, should be the Dead Sea region. When Abraham and his nephew Lot parted ways, Lot chose to settle in the Jordan valley "in the direction of Zoar." He moved his tents to "the cities of the plain" as far as Sodom.

Between 1973 and 1979 two archaeologists surveyed an area southeast of the Dead Sea and located the remains of five cities. Could these be the five "cities of the plain" identified in Genesis? *Show Cities of the Plain map.*

The most remarkable feature of one of these cities, Ben Edh-Dhra, is the number of graves. An estimated 20,000 tombs holding approximately half a million people and over 3 million pottery vessels were found at the site. This was clearly a well-populated area in the past, and may well be the ancient city of Sodom.

The excavation of the nearby city of Numeira revealed that this entire area was covered by the ashy debris of its final destruction. In some places the ashes were up to 16 inches in depth!

Why do you think the ash is significant? *Because the Bible says God rained down fire and brimstone on the cities. So it would have burned down, leaving ash.*

This information has led biblical archaeologists to conclude that this could be the city of Gomorrah.

? Do we need proof like this to cause us to believe events like Sodom and Gomorrah really happened? *Allow answers.*

“Proof” is not necessary to verify God’s Word. In fact, what more do we need than the very Word of the one who was there and who caused this event to happen? But isn’t it great that God allows man to find confirmations like this? They help us to be better equipped to defend our faith and the Bible against the doubters who attempt to question it.



➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets, and remind the students to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

Acts 17:26–27 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Pray that the students will understand that their sin is serious and deserves God’s punishment.
- Thank God for His mercy to all who will believe in Jesus Christ.