

GENESIS

F O U N D A T I O N S

Chapter 18 & 19 Study Guide

May 30, 2004

Genesis 18

1. BACKGROUND, CULTURE & EXEGESIS

The lesson of this chapter is, “Don’t get ahead of God,” and a good title would be: “What happens when we try to help God.” Even though the culture mores at that time would allow Sarai to offer Hagar and then be the “legal” mother of the child, this is not what God had in mind when he told the couple that he would give them an offspring. It is mind-blowing to conceive that the whole Arab / Israeli mess today is due to the decision Sarai made in this chapter. I wonder how many messes we create when we try to help God out?

Needless to say what was done was done and God assured Hagar that he would watch out for her and made a commitment to Ishmael. By the way, the name itself means ‘god that hears.’ Interesting how that name reflects the story given to us in this chapter.

Verse 12 tells us that Ishmael will be “a wild ass of a man” and that strife will be a continual part of his existence. Wow!

2. THEME & AUTHORSHIP

Themes

A couple predominate themes are found in Genesis. First is fact that this is a Book of Beginnings, the great introduction to the drama of redemption.

Second, we see God preparing a people – here we have God choosing and then testing. Whether it is Abraham, Isaac, Jacob or Noah for that matter God chooses and then begins to winnow and purge. Remember the goal is to create a people who would fulfill Genesis 3:15. It will be here that the initial step will be taken for man’s redemption by a divine covenant made with a chosen race whose early history is here portrayed.

Author – Moses / **Date** - 1450 – 1410 BC

3. Theology

It’s a really good thing that God isn’t a used car salesman, because He would be really bad at it. Or maybe Abraham would just be a really good consumer. Whatever it may be, Abraham had to be walking away from his conversation with God in Chapter 18 feeling pretty good about himself. God wanted to destroy the city of Sodom; He had heard that it was very wicked and deserving of destruction. The story makes it sound like He was just thinking out loud when Abraham asked Him if He would spare the city if there were fifty righteous people. God agreed. Abraham



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pushed his luck, and asked for forty-five. Again God agreed. 40? Agreed. 30? Agreed. Abraham got God down to five people. The whole city would be saved if God could find five righteous people.

What exactly does this tell us about God? That he is a pushover? Probably not. That He is indecisive? Unlikely. Does it teach us that God has an immense heart for people? Does it show us that for the sake of very few people who love Him, He would spare an entire city of defilers? I think we are getting close. Imagine this: God sits on a hillside outside of Las Vegas, Nevada. You happen to be within earshot of his private musings, and overhear something about sin, wickedness and destruction. You have lived your whole life just a few miles away and you have family that lives in Vegas, so you muster up all of your strength and guile and speak up, “Ahem, God? Can I be so bold as to ask you something? Yeah, uh, I know some people down there, and I know how ugly and deceitful a place it is, but could you possibly find it in your heart to spare the land if, and only if, you find a few people who love you?” Imagine the fear; imagine yourself holding your breath as you await his response. Finally, after what seems like an eternity of silence (remember a moment to God is like and eternity to us), He speaks. Very softly, sensing the distress in your voice, He agrees. However, the tension doesn’t end there. You know the city, finding fifty righteous people there is out of the question. So you push your luck, knowing in the back of your mind that you can only think of a small handful of believers in the town. Every time He says yes, it gets a little easier to ask again. As you are start to reach a manageable number it hits you, God doesn’t want to destroy the city at all. What was at first very intimidating to ask for now feels as if you are playing a part in a pre-scripted play. This conversation was supposed to happen, you may not be sure why, but you think it has something to do with grace, and maybe love.

4. WORD STUDIES

Unknowingly, Abraham’s hospitality invited the Lord himself into his home and prepared for them a great meal. It was soon revealed in Verse 14 “Is there anything too hard for the Lord?” and Sarah’s laughter changed to fear. We also see how Abraham’s prayer in the rest of the chapter goes to show that he was a friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7). But in the event Sodom could not even produce ten good men, but we do see the lengths to which God’s mercy goes.

5. Prophecies of Christ

Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. 2So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, 3and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. Gen 18:1-4



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Here we see another occurrence of a theophany. *Theophany* is formed from the Greek noun for God (*theos*) and the Greek verb “to appear” or “manifest” (*phaneo*). A theophany is a temporary, visible appearance or manifestation of God. It is a form of revelation in which God makes His presence known to people in a human form. A theophany must be distinguished from the permanent revelation of God in Jesus Christ, which we call the incarnation.

The most frequent appearance of God in human form is that of the *Angel of the Lord*. These preincarnate appearances may also be called Christophanies.

The Angel of the Lord is distinctly different from that of a servant-created angel. The preincarnate Christ as Angel of the Lord is identified as God by the fact that He is identified as God, called Himself God, received worship, and spoke with divine authority. Also these appearances show that the Angel of the Lord is distinguished from God the Father.

In Genesis chapter 18, find where the Angel of the Lord:

- Is identified as God
- Refers to Himself as God
- Receives worship
- Speaks with divine authority

How do created angels respond to those who bow to them in worship?
Why might he have bowed down in such a manner (Revelation 19:10, 22:9)?

Soul Winner, So What

In an age in which so many are seeking *spiritual enlightenment* and the talk of *angels* being common and broad, how will you better be able to speak from a biblical position when such conversations arise?

6. Attributes of God

God appears to men-

¹ Then **the LORD appeared to him** by the terebinth trees of Mamre,^[1] as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.

God sometimes appears with angels-

² So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, **three men** were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground,



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God allows us to serve Him-

⁵And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant."
They said, "Do as you have said."

Nothing is too hard for God-

¹⁴Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."

God knows everything-

¹⁵But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid.
And He said, "No, but you did laugh!"

God will honor our persistence-

²⁶So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."

³²Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: **Suppose ten should be found there?**"
And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten."

Small Group Question

God wants us to stand and be righteous. How are we, as a church, and you personally, standing for God?

7. BIBLE DIFFICULTIES / PROBLEM PASSAGES

Did Abraham change God's mind in number of righteous people it would take to save Sodom and Gomorrah?

Absolutely not. The more likely answer is God changed Abraham's mind. Through Abraham's probing to see how merciful God was, it was validated that God is just and He punishes sin. When it was said and done, Abraham was convinced that God was both kind and fair.

Soul Winner, So What

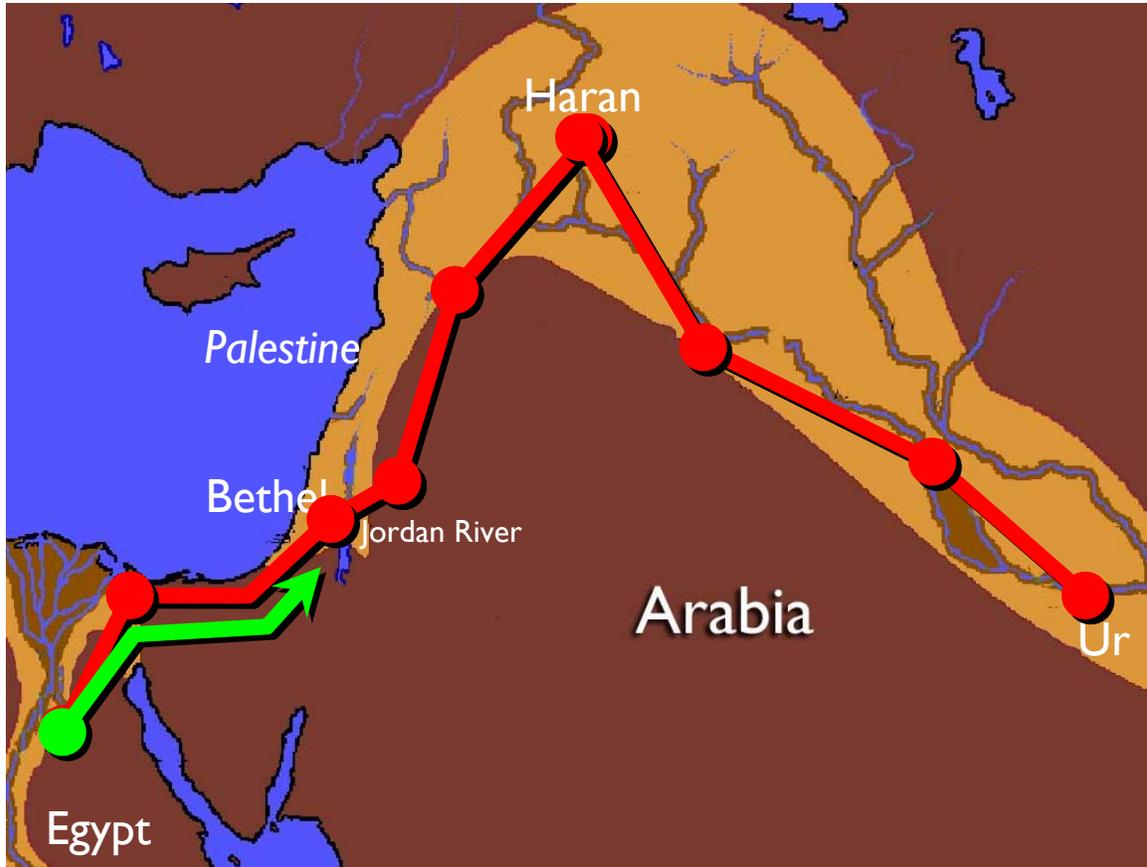
No matter how hard we pray and plead, we will never change God's mind. However, when we sincerely pray not our will but God's will to be done, our minds may change just like Abraham. It's easy to misuse prayer by using it to get everything we want. Praying for His will to be done helps us understand the mind and it gives us His perspective on life.



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8. Geographical Component



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Genesis 19

1. BACKGROUND, CULTURE & EXEGESIS

Here we have the narrative of the events of Sodom and Gomorrah. Do you wonder when Lot realized that things had degenerated; Do you wonder if he ever planned on leaving on his own; Do you wonder what had a hold on him?

The angels were going to stay in the city square that night, which was the custom in those days. Cities would be sure to have places that strangers could safely stay; this is the custom behind cities in America having parks within the heart of the city (like Central Park in New York or Balboa Park in San Diego). But like Sodom, these places are not really a place where sojourners could stay safely. Lot insisted the angels come into to his home, he knew what would happen to them in the city square, but as mentioned earlier things degenerated to the point where the entire town came to his door to sexually abuse these men. (Interesting ... how safe is Balboa Park at night?)

Hospitality is one thing and in the Middle East it is way above what we Americans are custom too; but when Lot offered his daughters, that sounded a major alarm. We read later in this chapter about their husbands, so we can assume that since they are virgins at this time they had only been betrothed (like Mary and Joseph).

The central point of this chapter is that the angels could do nothing until Lot (and we read in Peter that he was righteous) was delivered from the city; it appears the angels we literally dragging him out. The tragedy of course has to do with Lot's wife, because apparently the hold of the city kept her from being able to break free – sin can do that to us, wrap us up and keep us captive!

The end of this chapter is a bit bizarre as we see people again trying to help God and instead create a mess. The Moabites and the Ammonites were a constant thorn in the side of Israel and like Ishmael that could have been avoided if Lot's daughters didn't try to take things into their own hands.

Last point – Lot got greedy, was led astray by riches, and his end fate has him hiding in a cave. Be careful not to chase after riches, you never know where you might end up.

Small Group Questions

1. What does the Jesus have to say about riches?
2. What things in your life keep you in bondage? How can you be set free?



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3. Where is the verse in Peter that refers to Lot's righteousness? Is it possible to be righteous and not walk with God?

2. THEME & AUTHORSHIP

Themes

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Second, we see God preparing a people – here we have God choosing and then testing. Whether it is Abraham, Isaac, Jacob or Noah for that matter God chooses and then begins to winnow and purge. Remember the goal is to create a people who would fulfill Genesis 3:15. It will be here that the initial step will be taken for man's redemption by a divine covenant made with a chosen race whose early history is here portrayed.

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3. WORD STUDIES

Sodom means "burning." Isn't it interesting that it is named this even before it's destruction.

Soul Winner, So What:

Lot lived so long and was so content among ungodly people that he was no longer a believable witness for God. He had allowed his environment to shape him, rather than shaping the environment around him. Do those who know you see you as a witness for God, or are you just one of the crowd, blending in unnoticed? Lot had compromised to the point of almost being useless to God. When he finally made a stand, nobody listened. Have you become useless to God because you are too much like the world? To make a difference, you must first decide to "be" different, in your faith and in your "walk."

4. Prophecies of Christ

*And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed." **Gen 19:16-17***

In chapter 19 we see the depravity of Sodom; a city that was filled with sin and iniquity. The chapter begins with two angels who had taken on human form who



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previously along with God (chapter 18:22), went to Abraham as He forewarned of the coming destruction that shadowed Sodom and Gomorrah.

As we know, there is but only one way to be saved, and that is by grace through faith alone. Just as God is holy and a righteous judge, there must be payment for sin and rebellion against Him. Yet He promises to withhold His wrath from those who stand righteous by faith, “...the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the Day of Judgment...” (2 Peter 2:9).

- According to Chapter 18:26-32, what was it that Abraham pleaded before God?
- According to Chapter 19:16 how many were found to be righteous?
- In what manner do we see the *gospel* (good news) work out for Lot and his family? Vs. 17b

Lot was a man who had allowed himself to be greatly influenced by his culture.

- According to 2 Peter 2:6-9, what was Lot's greatest problem?
- How did God see him in spite of his spiritual weakness? Why?
- In what way does his spiritual weakness reveal itself as read in Gen. 19:6?

The angels that were given the duty to destroy these cities also instructed the escapees not to “look back...” in spite of the command, Lot's wife chose to do so.

- Why may she have looked back?
- What attachment did she have to this city?
- What effect did that attachment have on her end? Why/?

Read: Luke 17:28-32

As Jesus made reference to His second coming, He speaks of *Lot's day* as a warning to the judgment that is to come.

- Just as Lot's wife was almost at the line of deliverance, where was her heart?
- What point is Jesus making here in regard to His return?

Soul Winner, So What

What two lessons can we learn from the lives of Lot and his wife as we await the return of Jesus?

5. Attributes of God

1) God sends angels to represent Himself-

Now the **two angels came to Sodom** in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.



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- 2) God gives angel the power to stop us-
*¹¹And **they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door.***
- 3) God sometimes sends angels to destroy-
*¹³For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the LORD, and **the LORD has sent us to destroy it.***
- 4) God provides a way to escape His wrath-
*¹⁵When the morning dawned, **the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city."**¹⁶And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.*
- 5) God is merciful-
*¹⁶And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, **the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.***
- 6) God judges sin-
*²⁴Then **the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens.***
- 7) God punishes disobedience-
*²⁶But his wife looked back behind him, **and she became a pillar of salt.***

Small Group question-

God will always give us a way to escape sin, if we choose it. [1 Corinthians 10:13](#)
No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.
How have you been given a way of escape from sin? What are some areas that you need to rely on God's way out that you have not escaped?

6. BIBLE DIFFICULTIES / PROBLEM PASSAGES

Chapter 19: 8

"Look I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof."



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This raises a question why would Lot offer his daughters when he new according to the Mosaic Law, the violator of a betrothed woman's sanctity was subject to death by stoning

Deuteronomy 22

²³ If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, ²⁴ you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death-the girl because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man's wife. You must purge the evil from among you.

²⁵ But if out in the country a man happens to meet a girl pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die. ²⁶ Do nothing to the girl; she has committed no sin deserving death. This case is like that of someone who attacks and murders his neighbor, ²⁷ for the man found the girl out in the country, and though the betrothed girl screamed, there was no one to rescue her.

At the end of Verse 7 he says, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly!" Is Lot any less wicked by suggesting his daughters? What was Lot thinking? It is here that you see his spiritual weakness: Immorality (v-7-8). He showed a hate for the sins of his culture by trying to protect the angels and inviting them into his home, but hi offer of his daughters shows the influence of evil. Believers today are no longer shocked by the rampant sin in our society. What appalled us in the 50's we now accept to be normal? Do you accept things today that detest God? What are *you* doing about it?

Soul Winner, So What

Look around you, have you become callous to the things God's word say's is sin? We need to be reading His word daily so He will reveal those things hidden in our heart and so we can be an example to the darkness around us.

Small Group Question:

What is influencing you in your life toward Christ? (Psalm 119:1-16). Do you have more things influencing you toward Him or away from Him? What do you possibly need to give up?

7. Additional Small Group Questions

- 1) Morality was defined in the sermon as the standard of right and wrong.
 - a. Can a non moral person be a Christian? Why or why not?
- 2) Define Righteousness
 - a. What do you have to do to be righteousness? What are some scriptures that define righteousness for you?
 - b. Does just going to Church, or calling yourself a Christian make you righteousness?
- 3) In the sermon, there were five Biblical roles of the righteousness
 - a. The righteous persistently pray for protection. (**Gen 18:20-33**)
 - i. What is your prayer life like? Who are you praying for?
 - ii. Define persistently.



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- b. The righteous save the city by their presence. (**Gen 18:20-33**)
 - i. What impact are you having on your city, your family, your workplace?
 - ii. Discuss the presence that Lot had in the city.
 - c. The righteous pray for Gods intervention (**Gen 18:20, 21 & 19:13**)
 - i. How would we pray today for Gods intervention on our city?
 - ii. Can you commit to prayer in this manner?
 - d. The righteous provide security for the needy (**Gen 19:1-3**)
 - i. What does this look like in our city today?
 - e. The righteous point out sin and coming judgment (**Gen 19:9, 12-14**)
 - i. Pastor Miles challenged the church to do call your children's schools and ask 2 questions
 - 1. Do you believe homosexuality is normal and natural?
 - a. If it is normal and natural, why are there so many negative consequences to it?
 - 2. Are you telling my child that?
 - ii. How are you pointing out sin in our world today?
- 4) Read **Genesis 19:12-14**.
- a. In the sermon, Miles made the statement that God is not joking. Please discuss what this means.