

God has proven that he always judges fairly by destroying the wicked but delivering the righteous from his sweeping judgment, therefore rejoice in God’s perfect justice and seek deliverance in the Righteous One who was judged in your place.

Introduction – Today people are beginning to doubt whether the God of the Bible is righteous at all. [Richard Dawkins quote.] Many people have effectively put the God of the Bible on trial as a moral monster, doubting whether God judges fairly.

I. God on Trial

A. Abraham’s Question: does God judge fairly? (Gen 18:23-25)

Abraham steps into God’s courtroom (in v. 23 the verb *nagash* is a legal term meaning to “step forth in litigation”) and tests the fairness of the Judge.

B. God’s Answer: consider my dealings with Sodom (Gen 18:17-21, 26, 32b)

1. God is just: he is not willing to tolerate the sins of the wicked forever (Job 10:14; Josh 24:19).
2. God is merciful: he is willing to spare the wicked for the sake of the righteous (Ex 34:6-7).

II. Sodom on Trial

A. The Charges

1. *Generally* the sins of wickedness and injustice (v. 13; cf. 18:19-21). Elsewhere the sins of Sodom are identified as arrogance, apathy, and merciless treatment of the needy (Ezek 16:49).
2. *Manifestly* the sin of attempted homosexual rape (vv. 4-9). Lest we condemn rape and condone homosexuality, the NT highlights their sin as immoral, unnatural, sensual desire (2 Pet 2:6-9; Jude 7).
3. *Fundamentally* the sin of inhospitality (vv. 1-3). This is difficult to see without studying how Genesis 18 & 19 are closely related by way of comparison and contrast. Abraham and Lot demonstrated righteousness with the typical hospitality of their culture. The men of Sodom showed gross inhospitality, manifestly in wickedness, injustice, and (in this case) attempted homosexual rape.

B. The Evidence

1. Lot and his family (vv. 1-3, 14; cf 2 Pet 2:7). Lot showed hospitality to the travelers, making himself their “servant” and inviting them home to dine and lodge with his family. He urged them not to stay the night in the town square because Sodom was dangerous at night. As a righteous man living in Sodom, he knew from experience his neighbors were wicked.
2. The men of Sodom (vv. 4-9). Verse 4 is very clear that every single man of Sodom was guilty of violence against Lot and his household. In verse 9 they condemn themselves with their own words. They were prepared to break down doors to satiate their violent lust.
3. The angels/messengers (vv. 10-13). The angels came to Sodom to investigate the cries against Sodom. But they had to do more than observe Sodom’s behavior; they had to act in mercy to protect the righteous.

4. Abraham and Sarah (18:1-8, 22-33). Their hospitality to strangers shines brighter than that of Lot and contrasts sharply with the violence of Sodom toward the same strangers. Abraham pleaded with God to mercifully spare the wicked in Sodom for the sake of the righteous living there, but the men of Sodom would show no mercy to the righteous.

C. The Verdict

1. Sodom is wicked as charged (vv. 13). God has been patient with Sodom, giving opportunity to repent. Note the harmony of God's justice and mercy; cf. Ezek 33:11; 1 Thess 2:16.

2. Lot is righteous, albeit a buffoon (vv. 7-8, 14, 16a, 18-20, 30-38). Unfortunately, Lot perceives himself to be on the horns of a terrible dilemma—to choose between two wrong actions—protect his guests or protect his daughters. Lot simultaneously passes the test and fails the test! It is now clear that the wickedness of Sodomite culture has worked its way into Lot's thinking. Yet at the same time he has rebuked his neighbors ("brothers") for their wickedness and has set himself morally opposed to them. On this reckoning Lot is righteous.

D. Judgment and Deliverance

1. Narrowly save the righteous (vv. 10-22). Abraham's intercession for God to spare Sodom for the sake of 10 righteous in the city is not enough to stave off Judgment Day. Lot and his small family are barely saved (cf. 1 Pet 4:18). Lot's wife looks back yearning for her life in Sodom and she does not escape, becoming a pillar of salt.

2. Utterly destroy the guilty (vv. 23-29). God literally destroys Sodom and the surrounding cities by raining "fire and brimstone" on them. It was not just the people who fell under judgment. God "overthrew" all the cities, all the valley, all the inhabitants, and all the vegetation! Absolute destruction is the picture—like a nuclear bomb detonated in Sodom's town square!

III. You on Trial

A. Sodom's judgment is a sample (end-of-time intrusion) of the Great Judgment

1. Every instance of terrible judgment (the Flood, Sodom & Gomorrah, the Exodus, the Conquest of Canaan, the Babylonian Exile) is a preview of the Great Judgment (2 Pet 3:10). No one will escape the Great Judgment because no one is righteous before God (Rom 3:9-12, 19-20).

2. The greatest judgment in the Bible: Jesus' judgment on the cross as our substitute is the Great Judgment for the "righteous" (those who are righteous by faith). God will avert his judgment of the unrighteous for the sake of not ten righteous, but a single righteous person—Jesus Christ.

3. Jesus' second coming is the Great Judgment for the wicked (Mt 16:27; 2 Thess 1:5-10).

B. The Great Judgment: the Day of the Lord

1. Deliverance for those who trust in the Righteous One for their sake (Lk 17:20-37).

2. Judgment for those who trust in their own righteousness (Lk 18:9-14).

Conclusion – In one sense you are the jury, and you must admit that Sodom's trial proves God is not a moral monster (as many today charge), and that God will judge everyone fairly. But in another sense you are on trial. Are you confident that your own righteousness will require God to deliver you from judgment? Prepare to be disappointed in God's perfect justice. Or is Judgment Day for you a day of bright hope? Take heart, for God is merciful.

1 Original Language, Personal English Translation, and Textual Notes

Verse	Hebrew	Literal Translation	Notes
Gen 19:1	וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׁנֵי הַמַּלְאָכִים סָדְמָה בְּעֶרְבַּי וְלוֹט יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר־סְדֹם וַיֵּרְאֵה לֹט וַיִּקָּם לִקְרֹאתָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אַפָּיִם אֶרְצָה:	Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them he stood up to meet them and bowed down his face to the ground.	<i>Sitting in the gate of</i> may be an idiom for public judicial activity; <i>them</i> added for clarification; <i>face</i> is dual noun.
Gen 19:2	וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה נָא אֲדֹנָי סוּרוּ נָא אֶל־בַּיִת עֲבָדְכֶם וְלִינוּ וּרְחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁפַּמְתֶּם וְהִלַּכְתֶּם לְדַרְכְּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא כִּי בְּרַחוּב נָלִין:	Then he said, "Behold, I pray my lords turn aside now to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise early and go on your way." But they said, "No, for we will spend the night in the plaza."	<i>Pray, now</i> are particle interjections; <i>plaza</i> is the broad, open, public space in town probably either at or near the city gate.
Gen 19:3	וַיִּפְצְרֻבָּם מְאֹד וַיִּסְרוּ אֵלָיו וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל־בַּיִתוֹ וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם מִשְׁתֶּה וּמִצּוֹת אֶפֶה וַיֹּאכְלוּ:	But he urged them forcefully, so they turned aside to him and entered his house. Then he made a feast for them and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.	<i>Urged</i> is literally pushed, almost implying physical persuasion.
Gen 19:4	טָרַם יִשְׁכְּבוּ וְאֲנָשֵׁי הָעִיר אֲנָשֵׁי סְדֹם נִסְבּוּ עַל־הַבַּיִת מִנְעֵר וְעַד־זָקֵן כָּל־הָעָם מִקְּצֵה:	Before they lay down, the men of the city (the men of Sodom) surrounded the house, both young and old, everyone to the last man.	<i>Everyone to the last man</i> is literally, "All the people to the end" meaning every last man.
Gen 19:5	וַיִּקְרָאוּ אֶל־לוֹט וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אַיֵּה הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־בָּאוּ אֵלֶיךָ הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה הוֹצֵאֵם אֵלָינוּ וְנִדְעָה אֹתָם:	They called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to	<i>Know them</i> , or have sex with them. <i>Know</i> is often used as a biblical idiom to have sexual intercourse.

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		us so we may know them!"	
Gen 19:6	וַיֵּצֵא אֱלֹהִים לוֹט הַפֶּתַח וַתְּדַלֵּת סָגַר אַחֲרָיו:	Lot went out to the men at the doorway, shut the door behind him,	<i>Men</i> is unspecified as "them".
Gen 19:7	וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־נָא אַחֵי תִרְעוּ:	and said, "Alas, my brothers, I pray you not act so wickedly!	Lot's words are difficult to translate straightforwardly in English, but the sense is clear.
Gen 19:8	הִנֵּה־נָא לִי שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעוּ אִישׁ אוֹצִיאֵה־נָא אֲתָהֶן אֵלֵיכֶם וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶן כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם רַק לֹא־נָשִׂים הָאֵל אֶל־תַּעֲשׂוּ דָבָר כִּי־עַל־כֵּן בָּאוּ בְּצֶל קַרְתִּי:	Now behold, I have two daughters who have not known a man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as is good in your eyes. Only do nothing to these men, for this reason they have come in the shadow of my roof."	<i>I have</i> is implied; <i>in the shadow of my roof</i> idiomatic for in my house.
Gen 19:9	וַיֹּאמְרוּ גַּשְׁתְּהִלָּאָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָאֶחָד בְּאֵלֵינוּ וַיִּשְׁפֹּט שְׁפוֹט עֵתָה נָרַע לָךְ מִזֵּהם וַיִּפְצְרוּ בְּאִישׁ בְּלוֹט מְאֹד וַיִּגְשׁוּ לְשֹׁבֵר הַדֶּלֶת:	But they said, "Stand aside!" Then they said, "This one came in to sojourn, and now he is a judge! Now we will be evil to you more than them." Then they pushed at the man Lot forcefully and drew near to break the door.	<i>Stand aside</i> literally "draw near out there"; <i>he is a judge</i> literally he judges to judge
Gen 19:10	וַיִּשְׁלַחוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים אֶת־יָדָם וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת־לוֹט אֵלֵיהֶם תְּבִיטָה וְאֶת־הַדֶּלֶת סָגְרוּ:	But the men stretched out their hand and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door.	
Gen 19:11	וְאֶת־הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־פָּתַח תְּבִיטָה הִכּוּ בְּסַנְגָּרִים מִקָּטָן וְעַד־גָּדוֹל וַיִּלְאוּ לְמִצָּא הַפֶּתַח:	Then they struck the men who were at the entrance of the house with sudden blindness, from the small to the great, so they were	

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		weary to find the entrance.	
Gen 19:12	וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים אֶל-לוֹט עַד מִי-לָךְ פֹּה חָתָן וּבָנִיךָ וּבְנֹתֶיךָ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-לָךְ בָּעִיר הוֹצֵא מִן-הַמָּקוֹם:	Then the men said to Lot, "Who do you still have here? Son-in-law, or your son, or your daughter, or any who you have in the city? Bring them out of this place!	
Gen 19:13	כִּי-מִשְׁחָתִים אֲנַחְנוּ אֶת-הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי-גָדְלָה צַעֲקַתָּם אֶת-פְּנֵי יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁלַחְנוּ יְהוָה לְשַׁחֲתָהּ:	For we are destroying this place because the outcry is great before the LORD, so the LORD has sent us to destroy it."	<i>Sent us to destroy it is alliterative in the Hebrew (shalach us to shachat it)</i>
Gen 19:14	וַיֵּצֵא לוֹט וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל-חֹתְנָיו לֵקְחֵי בְנֹתָיו וַיֹּאמֶר קוּמוּ צֵאוּ מִן-הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה כִּי-מִשְׁחָתִית יְהוָה אֶת-הָעִיר וַיְהִי כַּמְצַחֵק בְּעֵינֵי חֹתְנָיו:	So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law who were taking his daughters, and said, "Arise! Go out from this place, for the LORD is destroying the city!" But he was joking in the eyes of his sons-in-law.	<i>Taking his daughters [in marriage], i.e., Lot's sons-in-law were engaged to be married to Lot's daughters</i>
Gen 19:15	וּכְמוֹ הַשָּׁחַר עָלָה וַיֹּאצְּרוּ הַמַּלְאָכִים בְּלוֹט לֵאמֹר קוּם קַח אֶת-אִשְׁתְּךָ וְאֶת-שְׁתֵּי בְנֹתֶיךָ הַנִּמְצָאֹת פֶּן-תִּסָּפֵה בְּעוֹן הָעִיר:	As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot in saying, "Arise! Take with you your wife and two daughters who are found here, lest you are swept away in the punishment of the city."	<i>As morning dawned literally "as the dawn went up"</i>
Gen 19:16	וַיִּתְמַהֲמַהוּ וַיִּחְזְקוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים בְּיָדוֹ וּבִידֵי-אִשְׁתּוֹ וּבְיַד שְׁתֵּי בְנֹתָיו בַּחֲמֶלֶת יְהוָה עָלָיו וַיֵּצְאוּהוּ וַיִּנְחָהוּ מִחוּץ לָעִיר:	But he delayed, so the men seized him, his wife, and two daughters by the hand (in the compassion of the LORD on him) and they brought him out and left him outside the city.	
Gen 19:17	וַיְהִי כַהוֹצִיָאם אֹתָם הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמַּלְאָכִים עַל-נַפְשְׁךָ	So it was, when they	

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	אֶל־תְּבִיט אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאֶל־תַּעֲמֹד בְּכָל־הַפֶּכֶר הַהָרָה הַמִּלֵּט בְּיַתְּסָפָה:	brought them outside, then one of them said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you or stop anywhere in the vicinity. Escape to the mountain lest you be swept away."	
Gen 19:18	וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹט אֱלֹהִים אֶל־נָא אֲדַנִּי:	But Lot said, "Not so, I pray my lords!	<i>My lords</i> could also be rendered "my Lord"
Gen 19:19	הִנֵּה־נָא מָצָא עַבְדְּךָ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וַתִּגְדַּל חַסְדְּךָ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי לְהַחְיֹת אֶת־נַפְשִׁי וְאַנְכִי לֹא אוֹכַל לְהַמְלִט הַהָרָה בְּיַתְּדַבְּקֵנִי הָרָעָה וּמָתִי:	Behold, I pray your servant has found favor in your eyes and you have shown kindness to me in preserving my life. But I am not able to escape to the mountain, lest the disaster cling to me and I die.	<i>Shown</i> or "enlarged"
Gen 19:20	הִנֵּה־נָא הָעִיר הַזֹּאת קְרִיבָה לָנוֹס שָׁמָּה וְהִיא מִצְעָר אִמְלִטָהּ נָא שָׁמָּה הֲלֹא מִצְעָר הוּא וַתַּחֲי נַפְשִׁי:	Behold now, this town is near to flee there, and it is a small one. Let me escape there, I pray (is it not a little one?), so my life will be saved."	
Gen 19:21	וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הִנֵּה נִשְׁאַתִּי פָנֶיךָ גַם לְדַבֵּר הַזֶּה לְבַלְתִּי הִפְכִי אֶת־הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ:	Then he said to him, "Behold, I grant you this matter, for I will not overthrow the city which you have spoken."	<i>Grant you</i> literally "lift up your face"
Gen 19:22	מַהֵר הַמְלִט שָׁמָּה כִּי לֹא אוֹכַל לַעֲשׂוֹת דְּבָר עַד־בֹּאֲךָ שָׁמָּה עַל־כֵּן קָרָא שֵׁם־הָעִיר צוּעָר:	Make haste, escape there, for I am not able to do the matter until you arrive there. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.	<i>Zoar</i> is a wordplay on <i>small place/one</i> .
Gen 19:23	הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ יָצָא עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְלוֹט בָּא צוּעָרָה:	The sun had risen on the earth when Lot arrived at Zoar.	<i>Risen</i> literally "come out"

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Gen 19:24	וַיְהִי הַמָּטָר עַל-סֹדֶם וְעַל-עֲמֹרָה גִפְרִית וְאֵשׁ מֵאֵת יְהוָה מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם:	Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah fire and brimstone from the LORD out of the heavens.	<i>Fire and brimstone: order is reversed in Hebrew; heavens or “sky”</i>
Gen 19:25	וַיִּהְיֶה אֶת-הָעָרִים הָאֵל וְאֵת כָּל-הַכֶּפֶר וְאֵת כָּל-יֹשְׁבֵי הָעָרִים וְצִמְחַת הָאֲדָמָה:	So God overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what sprouts of the ground.	<i>What sprouts of the ground meaning the plants/vegetation of the cities.</i>
Gen 19:26	וַתִּבֶּט אִשְׁתּוֹ מֵאַחֲרָיו וַתְּהִי נֹצֵיב מֶלֶח:	But his wife, from behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.	<i>His wife is Lot's wife.</i>
Gen 19:27	וַיֵּשֶׁב אַבְרָהָם בְּבֹקֶר אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר-עָמַד שָׁם אֶת-פָּנָיו יְהוָה:	And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the face of the LORD.	<i>Went literally “rose up”</i>
Gen 19:28	וַיִּשְׁקֹף עַל-פְּנֵי סֹדֶם וְעַמֹּרָה וְעַל-כָּל-פְּנֵי אֶרֶץ הַכֶּפֶר וַיֵּרָא וַהֲנִיחָה עָלָה קִיטָר הָאֲרֶץ כְּקִיטָר הַכִּבְשָׁן:	Then he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and all the surface of the valley's land, and he saw, and behold, thick smoke of the land had gone up like thick smoke of a kiln.	
Gen 19:29	וַיְהִי בִשְׁחַת אֱלֹהִים אֶת-עָרֵי הַכֶּפֶר וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת-אַבְרָהָם וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת-לוֹט מִתּוֹךְ הַהִפְכָּה בְּהִפְךָ אֶת-הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר-יָשָׁב בָּהֶן לוֹט:	So it was, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, then God remembered Abraham and sent Lot away from the midst of the destruction, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.	

2 Smooth Translation (BMS) of Genesis 19:1-29 from the Hebrew

¹ Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in Sodom's gate. When Lot saw them he stood up to meet them and bowed his face to the ground. ² Then he said, "Behold, my lords, please turn aside now to your servant's house to spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go your way." But they said, "No, we will spend the night in the plaza." ³ But he urged them forcefully, so they followed him and entered his house. Then Lot made a feast for them and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

⁴ Before they lay down, the men of the city (the men of Sodom) surrounded the house, both young and old, everyone to the last man. ⁵ They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so we may have sex with them!" ⁶ Lot went out to the men at the doorway, shut the door behind him, ⁷ and said, "Alas, my brothers, please do not act so wickedly! ⁸ Now behold, I have two virgin daughters. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them what you desire. But do nothing to these men, since this is why they have come under the protection of my home." ⁹ But they said, "Stand aside!" Then they said, "This one came here to sojourn, but now he is a judge! Now we will treat you worse than them." Then they pushed at Lot forcefully and approached the door to break it down. ¹⁰ But the men in Lot's house reached outside and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door. ¹¹ Then they struck the men who were at the door with sudden blindness, from small to great, so the men outside wore themselves out groping for the entrance.

¹² Then the men in Lot's house said to him, "Who do you still have here? A son-in-law, or your son, or your daughter, or anyone who you have in the city? Bring them out of this place! ¹³ For we are destroying this place because the outcry is great before the LORD, that is why the LORD has sent us to destroy it." ¹⁴ So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law who were engaged to his daughters, and said, "Rise up! Go out of this place, for the LORD is destroying the city!" But he appeared to be joking to his sons-in-law. ¹⁵ As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Rise up! Take your wife with you and two daughters who are found here, so you will not be swept away in the city's punishment." ¹⁶ But Lot delayed, so the men seized him, his wife, and two daughters by the hand (the LORD had compassion on him) and they brought him out and left him outside the city.

¹⁷ So it was, when the men brought them outside, then one of the men said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you or stop anywhere in the vicinity. Escape to the mountain so you will not be swept away." ¹⁸ But Lot said, "Please no, my lords! ¹⁹ Behold, I pray your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown kindness to me in preserving my life. But I cannot escape to the mountain, lest the disaster overtake me and I die. ²⁰ Behold now, this town is near to flee to, and it is a small one. Please let me escape there (is it not a little one?), so my life will be saved." ²¹ Then he said to Lot, "Behold, I grant you this favor, for I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken. ²² Go quickly, escape there, since I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

²³ The sun had risen when Lot arrived at Zoar. ²⁴ Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah fire and brimstone, it came from the LORD out of the heavens. ²⁵ So God overthrew those cities, all the valley, all the inhabitants of the cities, and the vegetation.

²⁶ But Lot's wife, from behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. ²⁷ And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the face of the LORD. ²⁸ Then he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and all the surface land of the valley, and behold, he saw thick smoke from the land that had gone up like thick smoke from a furnace. ²⁹ So it was, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham and sent Lot away from the midst of the destruction, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.

3 Exegetical Outline – Genesis 19:1-29 (Full)

- I. (A) Lot's Righteousness: Demonstrated in Hospitality (vv. 1-3)
 - a. V1. Two angel-messengers arrived at the gate of Sodom in the evening and were met by Lot who was exercising judicial leadership by sitting in the city gate.
 - b. V2. Lot invited the angels to be his houseguests for the night before the continued on their way, but the angels declined his invitation and opted instead to stay the evening in the town plaza.
 - c. V3. Lot strongly persisted, so they acquiesced and followed Lot home where he prepared supper for them and they ate together.
- II. (B) Sodom's Sin: Demonstrated in Inhospitability (e.g., Attempted Homosexual Rape) (vv. 4-9)
 - a. Lot Appeals to His Sodomite Neighbors as Brothers (vv. 4-7)
 - V4. After the meal (but before retiring for the night), every last man in the city of Sodom (both young and old) surrounded Lot's house.
 - V5. The Sodomites yelled out for Lot to surrender his house guests over to them so they could rape the angel-messengers.
 - V6. Instead, Lot went to speak to the mob—slipping out the front door and shutting it behind him.
 - V7. Lot deferentially addressed the mob as his brothers, begging them to not act so wickedly.
 - b. Lot Attempts to Appease His Sodomite Neighbors With His Own Daughters (v. 8)
 - V8. Lot sought to appease the mob and protect his house guests by offering instead his two virgin daughters to do with them as they pleased, and pleaded with the crowd to leave his house guests alone because as his guests they were under Lot's protection.
 - c. Lot's Appeals and Attempts to Appease His Sodomite Neighbors Endanger Him (v. 9)
 - V9. The mob grew angry, interpreting Lot's words as a condemning judgment on their behavior, threatened to treat him worse than the angel-messengers, and tried to push Lot away from the door so they could break into his house.
- III. (A') Lot's Deliverance: The LORD Saves Lot From the Judgment of Sodom (vv. 10-22)

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- a. Lot's Deliverance From the Sodomites (vv. 10-11)
- V10. The angel-messengers rescued Lot from the mob when they quickly dragged him inside and shut the door.
 - V11. The angel-messengers quelled the angry mob by striking those at the door with blindness so that they grew tired groping for the door.
- b. Lot Gathering the Righteous Ones in Sodom (vv. 12-14)
- V12. The angel-messengers immediately began preparing to launch their mission of judgment on Sodom by urging Lot to round up his family and anyone else in the city that belonged to him so as to bring them out of the city.
 - V13. The angel-messengers explained to Lot that the LORD had sent them to destroy the city for its wickedness, and they were about to begin.
 - V14. Lot responded by going to warn his daughter's fiancés of the LORD's imminent destruction of the city, but they thought Lot was kidding so they ignored him.
- c. Lot's Deliverance From the LORD's Wrath on Sodom (vv. 15-22)
- V15. At sunrise the next day, the angel-messengers told Lot it was now time to escape with his wife and two daughters lest they be swept away in Sodom's divine punishment.
 - V16. Lot did not move fast enough so the angel-messengers mercifully grabbed him, his wife, and two daughters by the hand and dragged them out of the city.
 - V17. When the angel-messengers brought Lot and his family outside the city limits, they commanded them to save their lives by fleeing to the hill country, and warned them to not look back toward Sodom or stop along the way lest they be caught up in the destruction.
 - V18. Lot desperately protested this command from the angel-messengers.
 - V19. Lot thanked the angel-messengers for saving his life and asked them for one more favor since he estimated that it was impossible for him to escape to the hills in time to avert the disaster.
 - V20. Lot requested that the angel-messengers allow him to flee for his life to a particular small town that happened to be nearby.
 - V21. One of the angel messengers granted Lot his requested favor, noting that the nearby small town formerly doomed to destruction would now be spared for Lot's sake.

- V22. The angel-messenger dismissed Lot, urging him to escape to the nearby small town (consequently named “Zoar” which in Hebrew means “little”) quickly because the judgment could not commence until Lot arrived safely.

IV. (B') Sodom's Judgment: The LORD Destroys the Wicked and Saves the Righteous, Thus Vindicating His Righteousness (vv. 23-29)

a. The LORD Rains Judgment on Sodom (vv. 23-25)

- V23. The narrator notes that the sun had risen by the time Lot arrived at Zoar (indicating the beginning of a new day = judgment day for Sodom).
- V24. The LORD judged the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by dropping sulfur and fire on them from the sky.
- V25. The LORD overthrew the Sodom, Gomorrah, all the valley and city inhabitants, and all the vegetation by incinerating them with fire.

b. Looking Toward Sodom: Lot's Wife Contrasted With Abraham (vv. 26-28)

- V26. While she trailed her husband on the way to Zoar, Lot's wife looked back to Sodom's destruction and therefore became a pillar of salt.
- V27. Early that same morning on the day of Sodom's judgment, Abraham returned to the same place where he had stood before God interceding for the righteous people in Sodom.
- V28. When Abraham looked down on Sodom, Gomorrah, and the whole valley, he saw the land smoking like the smoke billowing out of a burning furnace.

c. The LORD Remembers Abraham's Intercession and Vindicates His Own Righteousness (v. 29)

- V29. When God rescued Lot from the overthrown cities in which he lived, God vindicated his own righteousness by remembering Abraham who interceded for the righteous people in Sodom.

4 Exegetical Outline – Genesis 19:1-29 (Abbreviated)

Exegetical Proposition: The LORD vindicated his own judgments when he destroyed Sodom for its sin and delivered Lot and his family for their righteousness.

- I. (A) Lot's righteousness: Demonstrated in hospitality (vv. 1-3)
- II. (B) Sodom's sin: Demonstrated in inhospitality (e.g., attempted homosexual rape) (vv. 4-9)
 - a. Lot appeals to his Sodomite neighbors as brothers (vv. 4-7)
 - b. Lot attempts to appease his Sodomite neighbors with his own daughters (v. 8)
 - c. Lot's appeals and attempts to appease his Sodomite neighbors endanger him (v. 9)
- III. (A') Lot's deliverance: The LORD saves Lot from the judgment of Sodom (vv. 10-22)
 - a. Lot's deliverance from the Sodomites (vv. 10-11)
 - b. Lot gathering the righteous ones in Sodom (vv. 12-14)
 - c. Lot's deliverance from the LORD's wrath on Sodom (vv. 15-22)
- IV. (B') Sodom's judgment: The LORD destroys the wicked and saves the righteous, thus vindicating his righteousness (vv. 23-29)
 - a. The LORD rains judgment on Sodom (vv. 23-25)
 - b. Looking toward Sodom: Lot's wife contrasted with Abraham (vv. 26-28)
 - c. The LORD remembers Abraham's intercession and vindicates his own righteousness (v. 29)

5 Theological Outline

Theological Proposition: The LORD has shown that his judgments are always vindicated when he destroys unrepentant sinners for their wickedness against others and delivers righteous ones from judgment.

- I. (A) Hospitality: One way righteousness is demonstrated (vv. 1-3)
- II. (B) Inhospitality (e.g., attempted homosexual rape): One way wickedness is demonstrated (vv. 4-9)
- III. (A') Deliverance: God will certainly save the righteous from his wrath poured upon sin (vv. 10-22)
- IV. (B') Judgment: God will certainly pour his wrath upon sin and will certainly deliver the righteous from it, thereby vindicating his judgments (vv. 23-29)

6 Notes on Genesis 19:1-29

1. There are many textual and thematic parallels (and contrasts) between Genesis chapters 18 and 19, and between Abraham and Lot (and also between other characters) in these closely related scenes. Where Lot resembles Abraham, he demonstrates righteousness; where Lot contrasts with Abraham he shows how he has been corrupted by the world. Lot's righteousness compared to Sodom pales in comparison to Abraham.
 - a. Gen 18:1 || Gen 19:1. The scene is set. The angels meet Abraham near the trees of Mamre (a rural place); the same angels meet Lot at the gate of Sodom (an urban place). Abraham lived in tents and faithfully called on the name of the LORD; Lot lived in a city (the City of Man) thus demonstrating his divided loyalties between God and the world.
 - b. Gen 18:2 || Gen 19:1. Abraham and Lot both meet visitors (Abraham meets 3 men; Lot meets 2 of the same men who are in fact angels/messengers of the LORD) and bow to the ground in their presence. Both Abraham and Lot demonstrate ANE hospitality, but Abraham runs to meet his guests, whereas Lot merely rises to greet them.
 - c. Gen 18:3 || Gen 19:2. Abraham and Lot both invite their visitors to their home, identifying themselves as the "servant" of the visitor.
 - d. Gen 18:4-5 || Gen 19:2. Abraham and Lot both invite their visitors to stay and wash their feet, rest themselves, and then go on their way. Abraham's guests initially accept his invitation; Lot's guests initially decline his invitation.
 - e. Gen 18:6-8 || Gen 19:3b. Both Abraham and Lot prepare a feast for their guests. While it is clear both men labored to prepare the feast, the text offers more details of Abraham's preparations, perhaps highlighting his generous hospitality. Abraham serves better food than Lot (cakes of fine flour vs. unleavened bread). Abraham serves his guests and stands as a servant while they eat; Lot serves his guests but sits and dines with them, thus elevating Abraham's service. Abraham's wife participates in offering hospitality to the guests; there is no record of Lot's wife participating in preparing the feast.
 - f. Gen 18:9-15 || Gen 19:15-26. Abraham's wife (Sarah) and Lot's wife both initially disbelieved the LORD'S message to them. Sarah laughed at the notion that she, an old barren woman, could birth a child. Lot's wife lingered with her husband at the LORD'S urgent command to flee Sodom. In contrast, Sarah feared the LORD when she was gently rebuked; Lot's wife showed no fear when she turned a gaze back at Sodom. Sarah was soon blessed by the LORD with a child; Lot's wife was immediately cursed by the LORD when she became a salt pillar.

- g. Gen 18:10 || Gen 19:5. The men bring a message that Abraham must once again know his wife, for a child will be born to Sarah. Assumed in the LORD's promise is that Abraham and Sarah must have marital relations in order to activate the promise of a child, who will be the son of Abraham and Sarah, not the Son of God (as Jesus was in Mary's womb). Whereas the marital love shared between Abraham and Sarah is beautiful and good, the sexual act demanded of Lot's house guests is ugly and evil. Abraham and Sarah model biblical marital love; Sodom perverts this model into extramarital, homosexual rape.
- h. Gen 18:12 || Gen 19: Sarah laughed to herself, disbelieving the word of the angels that she would bear a child. Lot's sons-in-law think Lot is joking about the impending destruction of Sodom. Sarah is a righteous woman who receives a gentle rebuke from the LORD. Lot's sons-in-law are left to judgment for their unbelief.
- i. Gen 18:23-32 || Gen 19:18-22. There is a narrative contrast between Abraham's intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah with Lot's intercession for himself. Abraham pleaded with the LORD on behalf of the righteous in Sodom and the LORD showed mercy to them (Lot and his family), but the city was not spared. Lot pleaded with the angels on his own behalf and the angels showed mercy to him, and a town was spared. Note that Lot does not plead for mercy on Zoar. He pleads for his own mercy! When compared closely, Abraham is clearly more righteous than Lot.
- j. Gen 18:16-19:29. The narrative of Sodom's destruction is divided into (1) Abraham's intercession with the LORD for Sodom on account of its righteous inhabitants, and (2) the messengers/angels rescuing Lot and his family from Sodom's doom. These two portions of the narrative are bracketed by an *inclusio* of looking down toward Sodom (cf. Gen 18:16; 19:28).
- k. Gen 19:26 || Gen 19:28. Lot's wife looked at Sodom and became a salt pillar. Abraham looked at Sodom (perhaps at the same time?) and did not. Lot's wife looked to Sodom as her home. She looked to save her life, but lost it. Abraham looked to Sodom, fearing the LORD's righteous judgment. He looked (as his intercession for Sodom demonstrated) to lose his life, and found it. How so? Abraham had yielded to Lot's wishes and granted him the more desirable and prosperous land in the valley, opting to take the less desirable hilly land. Abraham had been willing to lose his prosperity and inheritance, but instead looked upon a devastated valley realizing the land he had claimed instead was in fact the blessed land.
2. V1. The two angels who arrive at Sodom are the same angels/messengers who were with the LORD when they visited Abraham in Genesis 18. Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom, possibly taking his place as a civic ruler or judge. In the ANE, city rulers exercised their judicial function at the city gateway. Apparently Lot has risen to a place of civic and judicial authority in the city, suggesting that he cared for the well-being of the city—culturally, economically, and perhaps even morally and spiritually. The Apostle

Peter referred to Lot as a righteous man (2 Pet 2:7). When Lot saw the angels approaching the gate of Sodom, he gave the customary cultural greeting of bowing at their feet. Was there no one else in the city of Sodom (especially of the city officials whose responsibility it is to welcome travelers) who offered the customary hospitality? This does not bode well for Sodom's trial before the LORD! They will not be able to rely on the excuse that nomadic hospitality customs do not apply in the city.

3. V2. Lot shows hospitality to the angels by offering his own home for lodging and fellowship tonight. Lot offers himself in service to the visitors. He is their "servant". He does not plan to detain them from their business, thus he offers they may arise early and be on their way. But the angels initially decline Lot's generosity, opting instead to spend the night in the town square, presumably to conduct their recognizance mission of observing the city to verify the cries against it that God has heard (Gen 18:20-22). Note that Lot, who formerly lived in a tent adjacent to Sodom, is now living inside the city in a permanent dwelling. This suggests he is in the process of becoming one with Sodom.
4. V3. But Lot did not take no for an answer. Perhaps he knew that the men would be in danger outside after dark. When night falls, the wicked believe they can act with impunity under cover of darkness. Perhaps the men of Sodom believed that the gods could not see their wickedness without daylight to expose them (cf. Jn 3:19-20). The angels finally accepted Lot's urging to spend the night in his home. They began the night feasting under the shelter of Lot's protection. So far this incident parallels many details that are later used in the account of the incident of the Benjaminites at Gibeah (Jdg 19:18-20). In the NT generous hospitality is also a high virtue (Heb 13:2).
5. V4. After supper (but before bedtime), every last man of Sodom surrounded Lot's house. Abraham had petitioned the LORD to spare the city for the sake of 10 righteous men (Gen 18:32). If all the men outside Lot's house have come for evil purposes, then clearly there are not even 10 righteous Sodomites! It is unlikely that Lot's sons-in-law are included in the mob. The angels later reckon them as Lot's family, not as Sodomites.
6. Vv 5-9. What is the sin of Sodom? In this text there are two sins highlighted: inhospitality and violent lust, both manifesting themselves in the form of violating guests. Homosexuality is not the explicit focal point of the text, although it is portrayed as a wicked expression of Sodom's violation of others and is in fact a strategy of humiliation.¹ It is worth noting that homosexuality is a capital offense in the OT (Lev 18:22; 20:13) and the sin of Sodom is portrayed as the worst sort of sexual deviance (cf. Jdg 19; Jude 7). In the NT, Paul traces the root of homosexuality to man's unthankful attitude toward God (Rom 1:21-27). Jude cautions his readers to avoid the sexual immorality and perversion that brought judgment down on Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude 7).

¹ Elsewhere in the Bible the sins of Sodom are identified as oppression (Isa 1:10); adultery, lying and supporting criminals (Jer 23:14); and arrogance, apathy, and merciless treatment of the needy (Ezek 16:49). See *Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible* note on Genesis 19:4.

7. V5. What do the men outside Lot's house do? Are they assembled with righteous or wicked intent? Will they now offer the customary hospitality to strangers that they failed to extend when the angels first arrived at the city gate? No, they call out in unison for Lot to deliver over the men so they may rape them! Far from offering to extend hospitality, they demand that Lot help fulfill their violent homosexual lust. The Bible uses a common euphemism at this point. Literally, the text reads, "Bring them out to us so we may know them!" The verb "to know" is commonly used to describe sexual intercourse. Could it be that while Abraham is "knowing" his wife by spiritual faith, the men of Sodom are concurrently seeking to "know" two strangers according to their fleshly desires?
8. V6. Lot would not comply with his neighbors. Instead of delivering his guests (who had come under his sheltering protection), Lot slipped out the front door and closed it behind him. This is a courageous act by Lot as he put himself in danger to protect his house guests. The suspense builds as the scene shifts to Lot alone against the angry mob.
9. V7. Lot, like Abraham in the previous chapter (Gen 18:22-33), begins to intercede for the righteous. Abraham pleaded the LORD for mercy on the few righteous men of Sodom, and ironically Lot now pleads the men of Sodom for mercy on the righteous men in his house—who happen to be the only righteous men in Sodom! Abraham's dialogue with the LORD was predicated on the certainty of God's justice. In effect, Abraham had put God's justice to the test: it was unthinkable that in judging the wicked God would not spare the righteous. But God's righteousness passes the test. He will spare the righteous in the city—all of whom happen to be under Lot's roof. Abraham and Lot are thus unknowingly interceding for the same people! Specifically, Lot begs the Sodomites to not act so wickedly. Lot understood their demand to "know" the two men. The men of Sodom were not trying to express belated hospitality. Lot knew their character since he was their neighbor. Ancient Near East (ANE) conventions of hospitality are violated to the nth degree by the Sodomites who attempt to homosexually rape their visitors. Note that in many ANE cultures (but not the Hebrew culture), the homosexual act between consenting adults was not judged to be immoral, but all cultures regarded homosexual rape (especially of guests) as always wrong.
10. V8. Amazingly, Lot's virtue of hospitality to strangers trumped his responsibility to protect his virgin daughters from the lustful mob. Lot offered a deal to the men: take his two daughters in exchange for his two male houseguests. This turn of events is shocking, cowardly and inexcusable! Perhaps Lot was trying to buy time through bluffing, knowing the men would reject his offer. Perhaps Lot offered to surrender his daughters to gang rapists by rationalizing that at least the men of Sodom would not be guilty of violating nature with their homosexual lusts, or perhaps that he was absolving his responsibility to shelter his unmarried daughters by giving them away in "marriage", thus salvaging his own righteousness on a possible technicality? Whatever Lot thought, his proposed exchange revealed a sinful desire to appease the men of Sodom. Lot found himself in position to preach righteousness and share the gospel with them (as it had been revealed to Abraham by the LORD). Instead Lot chose to save his own life and

reputation when he should have trusted in the LORD to save him from the predicament.² Lot appears to be as big a hypocrite as the Sodomites are sinners! Lot's house guests have not intervened at this point, perhaps to test his righteousness. Unfortunately, Lot perceives himself to be on the horns of a dilemma—to choose between two wrong actions—protect his guests or protect his daughters. But there is always a third option—trust God. Lot simultaneously passes the test and fails the test! At this point it becomes clear that the wickedness of Sodomite culture has worked its way into Lot's thinking. Yet at the same time he has rebuked his neighbors (“brothers”) for their wickedness and has set himself morally opposed to them. On this reckoning Lot is righteous.

11. V9. Lot's unrighteous plan to offer his daughters to the crowd backfired. The crowd revolted against him and now no one was safe from their violent advances. Lot attempted to salvage his reputation with his neighbors, but they saw him as an outsider (one who sojourns) who suddenly had become judgmental of their lifestyle. Lot had acted as a power broker, protecting or surrendering those under his protection, and assumed he was safe himself from his neighbors. But the Sodomites, who disavowed Lot as their neighbor, turned on him by vowing to do worst to Lot than homosexual rape of the houseguests. The verdict is clear: Sodom is decidedly inhospitable and demonstrably wicked.³ Then just as Lot had forcefully urged (פָּצַר) the strangers to lodge with him for the night, the Sodomites replied by forcefully pushing (פָּצַר) against Lot and approached the door to break it down. The angry mob had degenerated into an unruly mob bent on satiating their lustful desires. What will become of Lot? His daughters? His guests? The men of Sodom?
12. V10. A timely reprieve! The angels delivered Lot from the mob by opening the door, grabbing Lot, pulling him inside to safety, and then locking the door. But this only serves to heighten the dramatic tension. They are still surrounded by the crowd of violent Sodomites right outside the house, and now the crowd is angrier. Will they break into the house? How long until they do? How will they escape?
13. V11. The angels with their divine power come to the rescue. Just as the LORD had confused the language of the men of Babel, reducing them to impotent babblers (Gen 11:1-9), the angels (as divine messengers and bringers of judgment commissioned by the LORD) struck the Sodomites with blindness, reducing them to impotent gropers.⁴ The

² Ironically, Lot's offering of his daughters for shameful sexual use turns out to be his own undoing. Later his daughters get Lot drunk and shamefully have sex with their father, incestuously conceiving his only sons Moab and Ammon (Gen 19:30-38). His daughters are not raped, but he is, and by his own daughters!

³ The attentive reader will recall that earlier in the Abraham narrative it was Sodom that was rescued from the eastern kings by Abraham's connection with Lot. Thus the Sodomites prove they are also ungrateful for this favor 15 years prior. Sodom could have been subjected as vassals to Abraham as their suzerain lord, so gratitude would demand they respect Lot for the sake of Abraham.

⁴ In the Hebrew, the word for blindness (סְנַנְרִים; HALOT: to dazzle, blind, dazzling, deception) connotes the temporary kind of blindness caused by a bright light.

men's energy (physical and sexual) completely dissipated as they grew weary trying to find their way in the darkness. Their wickedness, which showed their spiritual blindness, now manifested itself in physical blindness. Would the angels next bring physical destruction on the city for its spiritually destructive sins?

14. V12. While the angels are the bearers of judgment on Sodom and its population, they will not allow the righteous to be swept away with the wicked. God's righteousness will be vindicated! The angels will protect righteous Lot and all those for whom he (as the patriarch) is responsible for. Those who are eligible to escape destruction include Lot's sons-in-law, daughters, wife, and anyone else in the city whom Lot has under his protection. All must leave now! Why?
15. V13. Because the angels are about to destroy the place. God has been patient with Sodom (and Gomorrah), giving them opportunity to repent through the presence of righteous Lot as their neighbor. The Israelites would learn that God is patient with sinners, but that when his judgment comes, it comes swiftly and decidedly. For Sodom, the time has come because the outcry against its inhabitants has become too great for the LORD to relent any longer. The narrative does not specify who is crying out against the city. Presumably it is Lot and perhaps others who have been oppressed by the wicked Sodomites. How will God respond to these outcries? By commissioning two angels to destroy the city.
16. V14. Lot seemed to understand the urgency of the situation. He immediately went to his (two?) future sons-in-law (the men engaged to marry his two daughters) and strongly urged them to get up and flee the city because the LORD is ready to destroy it. But not only did they not heed him, they laughed at Lot because he seemed to be joking to them. Were Lot's sons-in-law irreligious and worldly, taking their father-in-law as a crazy but harmless religious fanatic? Or perhaps they had not seen this God-fearing side of Lot before, and didn't know what to make of it? Whatever the situation, Lot was not able to persuade them that he was quite serious and telling the truth. Whereas Lot possessed no moral persuasion, Abraham persuaded (pleaded with) God to spare the city for the sake of ten righteous.
17. V15. The preceding action apparently did not unfold in a matter of minutes, but a matter of hours. As the sun began to rise, the angels strongly urged Lot to leave NOW! This heightened urgency suggests that the LORD decreed for Sodom's destruction to occur this day, and the angels must be about their mission. They now command Lot to get up and leave immediately with his wife and two daughters who are here. There is no more time to gather others outside the walls of Lot's house. If Lot lingers, they risk being swept away in the city's destruction.
18. V16. Amazingly, Lot does the unthinkable—he lingers! Does he not comprehend the urgency of the message? It seems Lot is more secure in the city surrounded by the wicked than outside the city with God! What will the angels do? Will God's righteousness not be vindicated after all? Will the righteous be swept away in the destruction of the wicked because they were pokey? Lot has forced the hand of God. So the angels (the men) seized Lot, his wife, and two daughters by the hand and dragged

them forcefully outside the city limits. Lot and his family deserved to die for their sinful hesitation, but the LORD proved to be merciful to them.

19. V17. But apparently the angels will not do everything for Lot and his family. Even outside the city limits, they are still in danger of falling back into its judgment. They are not “out of the woods” yet, but must flee to the hills. It appears they have not packed their bags or any other belongings. Now Lot and his kin must flee for their lives to escape God’s righteous judgment. They must now make a run for higher ground. Time has run out on them. They cannot even turn and look back while they are in the valley. The suspense inside Lot’s home in the city now gives way to suspense outside the city as Lot sprints with his family to escape the epicenter of God’s judgment on Sodom. What sort of judgment does the LORD have in store that Lot must flee to the hills? It must be indiscriminate and widespread destruction, akin to the effect of modern weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).
20. V18. Lot seems to finally understand his peril. He quickly surmises that leaving the valley is impossible. He cannot run that fast! So he protests to the angels: “Not so, I pray my lords!”
21. V19. Lot continues his protest, but first thanks the angels for their mercy in saving his life. All possessions, all prosperity, and all the vain things of this life fall to the wayside when people see that their life is spared. Is Lot (for the first time) beginning to see life’s priorities clearly? He accurately assesses that he is not able to escape quickly enough to the hills, and if he makes the attempt he and his family will be overtaken in the disaster and die. The disaster will cling to him! On the other hand, it seems that Lot does not trust God to save him. Lot cannot bear to live outside an urban setting with only God to protect him. So he pleads to flee to a very small town rather than escape to the mountain countryside.
22. V20. So Lot proposes an alternate escape plan. There is a nearby town that is very small—it is not Gomorrah—that is close enough in which to seek shelter. Lot requests permission to escape there, reminding the angels that it is a small town. Why does Lot emphasize that the town is small? Perhaps to argue that he is not attempting to trade the luxury of cosmopolitan living in Sodom for the same benefits elsewhere. Lot may be trying to convince the angels that he is forsaking the sins of the big city. Lot is not seeking creature comforts, but merely to save his life.
23. V21. The angel grants Lot’s request. Even though the small town is nearby in the same valley as Sodom, the angel will spare it from destruction. God’s abounding mercy upon undeserving sinners is on display.
24. V22. The angel dismissed Lot to escape quickly to the small town, reminding Lot that judgment could only commence after Lot arrived at the “little place”, which was henceforth known as Zoar (Hebrew for “little” [צוֹעַר]). The name of the town is a wordplay on the way Lot described it as a little place (מִצְעָר). Zoar was one of the ancient five Cities of the Plain (cf. Gen 13:12; 14:2). Zoar was at the border of the land which the LORD outlined for Moses (Deut 34:1-4).

25. V23. By the time Lot arrived at Zoar, the sun had risen. The Day of Judgment had arrived! In the ANE, the judicial court symbolically opened its session at sunrise to render judgment. The original Israelites would learn that God's threats of a coming Day of Judgment are not empty threats. Sodom's day of reckoning is an example (type) of the coming Day of the LORD.
26. V24. Until this point in the narrative, the reader has been left to guess the form of judgment God would dispense on Sodom. Now we learn that the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with a plague of fire and brimstone (sulfur and fire) from the sky. Sodom and Gomorrah were utterly incinerated by the LORD. The text describes the disaster in such a way that ignores the secondary causes (e.g., an earthquake or volcanic eruption) that God may have used to trigger the fire and brimstone that destroyed the city. The implication is clear: God did it!⁵ As God previously destroyed the earth with water (Gen 6-9), now God judged the sin of mankind found in the twin cities with fire. In the NT, the apostle Peter warned that similar judgment would come on the entire earth from the Lord on the last day (2 Pet 3:5-7, 12). The judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah is an eschatological intrusion of the Day of the LORD, a foreshadow of hell's terror. The Israelites would have heard this story as a warning against wickedness and rebellion against their covenant LORD.
27. V25. The scope of God's judgment is defined. God did not merely destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, but the entire valley where they were located (except the small town of Zoar where Lot fled to safety). All humans and plant life were burned to ashes in the judgment. The picture of the terrain is one of "scorched earth". The text repeats that the inhabitants of the cities were overthrown, emphasizing that the City of Man is no place to escape the judgment of God. The LORD hears the outcries from cities, small towns, and countryside. People erect cities and build civilizations for mutual safety from man, beast, and nature. But God is the Lord over the City of Man, and he will judge its sin.
28. V26. Not all of Lot's party escaped. His wife turned and looked back, consciously disobeying the clear instruction given by the angel who saved them from the judgment of Sodom. The sense is not that Lot's wife caught a fleeting glimpse of her former home, but that she turned and yearned for Sodom. She refused to look away with her husband who journeyed away from their former life, but instead she turned and looked back. She was not present in the city, but her heart had never left. Hence she became a pillar of salt—a fitting punishment since the local geography is characterized by bizarre salt formations. She had become a grotesque monument to Sodom. Her transformation may not be miraculous—perhaps she was buried (like the rest of the valley) under the fire and

⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 279, provides a scientific explanation of what happened (but not as an argument that God did not cause or superintend the natural causes). "Scientifically, the fire and cataclysmic destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah may be explained by an earthquake. Heat, gases, sulfur, and bitumen would have been spewed into air through the fissures formed during a violent earthquake (see Gen 14:10). The lightning that frequently accompanies an earthquake would have ignited the gases and the bitumen."

brimstone raining from sky, thus freezing her in a molten lava salt pillar. As it turns out, God would have spared Sodom for the sake of ten righteous men, but Lot is the only one! His wife (v. 26) and daughters (vv. 30-38) prove they are saved, not by their own righteousness, but rather because they are covered by Lot as their family head. The Israelites would be reminded by the salt pillars of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the story of Lot's wife, and the danger of living with divided loyalties. The Israelites must have no other god but the LORD, and must not live like the former inhabitants of the Promised Land.

29. V27. Abraham reenters the story, and his reentry here provides another literary and thematic link between Genesis 18 and 19. He last appeared interceding with the LORD for Sodom, and now he returns early in the morning to the same spot where he and the LORD stood when they discussed whether God would violate his own character and destroy the righteous along with the wicked.
30. V28. Abraham must have wondered if his intercession for Lot and anyone who lived righteously in Sodom would be sufficient to save the city. Now Abraham saw with his own eyes the proof that there were not even ten righteous people to be found in the city. For as he looked down upon the valley, he witnessed what seemed to be smoke from a furnace billowing from the destroyed ruins where Sodom and Gomorrah once stood proudly as a monument to man's autonomy and wickedness. Abraham must have recognized that the presence of a smoking furnace in the valley of destruction was clear evidence that the LORD was present in judgment, for Abraham had previously seen the LORD in a smoking furnace and burning torch (Gen 15:17-21), reminding him that all the land was his inheritance by the LORD's covenant promise.
31. V29. This verse is the conclusion of the account of Abraham and Lot's intersecting lives.⁶ Lot had chosen the cities of the valley, although they were technically Abraham's inheritance (Gen 13:8-12). Abraham yielded to his nephew, stepping out in faith that the blessed land would be his possession someday. In the judgment of Sodom, the LORD remembered Abraham (i.e., remembered his covenant promise to Abraham, but especially his discussion with Abraham about saving the righteous living in Sodom) by rescuing Lot from destruction. God is indeed the judge of the whole earth who judges with righteousness and equity. Will the judge of all the earth do right? Yes and amen! Not only does God not punish the righteous along with the wicked, but he goes further by sparing the wicked for the sake of the righteous.
32. V29. In the end, Lot appears in this story as a buffoon. Everything he does backfires. He tries to be a blessing to his guests, his neighbors, and his family, but fails miserably—his guests must save his life, his neighbors turn in judgment on him, his family doesn't heed his warnings to flee the city, and his daughters turn the sins of Sodom back on him.

⁶ There is one more mention of Lot narrating what became of him and his two daughters (Gen 19:30-38), and the story of Abraham continues through Genesis 25, but presumably Abraham and Lot never interact with each other again. Genesis 19:29 summarizes the last life event when their stories are intertwined.

Lot is ultimately blessed by the mercy of God (19:16) and the blessing of Abraham (19:29).

33. V29. This story reminded the Israelites that while they were the rightful heirs of the patriarchal promises, choosing the path of self-indulgence and worldly prosperity, instead of completely allying themselves on the LORD's side, would result in catastrophic consequences. As such, the account of Sodom's destruction serves as a memorable pledge that God will displace the Canaanites from the Promised Land when their collective wickedness reaches the tipping point. In effect it is a fulfillment in seed-form of the land promise to Abraham.
34. V29. The story also serves as a lesson how God judges sinners and extends mercy. God does not judge quickly or on an angry whim; he carefully investigates the situation and the people involved (Gen 19:13). He hears the cries of the oppressed by punishing their oppressors (Gen 19:4, 24). God listens and considers the prayers of his children before making decisions (Abraham interceding for the righteous in Sodom; Lot interceding for himself and thus for Zoar). God is willing to spare many wicked people for the sake of a few righteous people. God gives people a final opportunity to repent before bringing judgment (Gen 19:7-8). God disciplines his children for their sanctification, but judges the wicked with penal punishment. God is merciful not merely to individuals, but to their families. His mercy is by sovereign choice as he grants Lot safe passage to the urban Zoar, but punishes Lot's wife for desiring the urban Sodom.

7 Sermon References

Job 10:14 ¹⁴ If I sin, you watch me and do not acquit me of my iniquity.

Exodus 34:6-7 ⁶ The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

Ezekiel 16:49 ⁴⁹ Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.

Jude 1:7a ⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire,

Ezekiel 33:11 ¹¹ Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

1 Peter 4:18 ¹⁸ And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

2 Peter 3:10 ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Romans 3:9-12, 19-20 ⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Luke 13:1-5 There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? ³ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

Matthew 16:27 ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

Luke 18:9-14 ⁹ He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰ "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."