

Dr. Kenneth Mathews, Genesis, Session 14, Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18-19) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathews, Genesis, Session 14, Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18-19), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Kenneth Mathews **explains** Genesis chapters 18-19, focusing on the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. The **lecture highlights** the deepening relationship between God and Abraham, Abraham's role as an intercessor, and God's balance of justice and mercy. **Key themes** explored include Abraham's hospitality, the nature of the divine visitors (God and angels), and God's communication with Abraham regarding the fate of Sodom. The **contrast** between Abraham's righteousness and Lot's compromise is emphasized, along with the consequences of Lot's choices and the resulting legacy of his daughters. Finally, the **lecture concludes** by summarizing the lessons learned about God's character and His relationship with Abraham.

2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathews, Genesis, Session 14 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Pentateuch → Genesis).



**Mathews_Genesis_
Session14.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Mathews, Genesis, Session 14, Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18-19)

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. Kenneth Mathews' Session 14 on Genesis 18-19, focusing on Sodom and Gomorrah:

Briefing Document: Genesis 18-19 - Sodom and Gomorrah

Overview:

This session explores Genesis 18-19, focusing on the events surrounding the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Dr. Mathews identifies three main areas of focus: the deepening relationship between God and Abraham, Abraham's role as an intercessor, and the demonstration of God's justice and mercy. He highlights the contrasts between Abraham and Lot and draws parallels to other biblical narratives.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. **Growing Relationship Between God and Abraham:**
 - **Hospitality as a Context for Divine Encounter:** Abraham's generous hospitality to three visitors (one of whom is identified as Yahweh/the Lord, and the other two as angels) sets the stage for divine revelation and deeper relationship. Mathews states, "Given that, of course, you did not have the kind of hotel system that travelers have today...When it comes to these three figures, they are highly welcomed by Abraham."
 - **Confidentiality and Revelation:** God shares his plans with Abraham, revealing the impending judgment of Sodom, signifying a significant level of trust and intimacy. Mathews says, "Then the Lord said, see, the Lord is going to inform, reveal His plan to Abraham. That in itself shows a special relationship when He shares with Abraham what is to come about."
 - **Abraham as a Friend of God:** The lecture connects Abraham to other examples of individuals with a close relationship to God, mentioning Isaiah 41:8 where Abraham is called the "friend of God".
 - **Co-participation in Faith:** Both Abraham and Sarah are shown to be co-participants in the promises of God. Mathews explains, "So, the promise is that in a year's time, that Sarah will give birth...Abraham and Sarah are co-participants. A sense of ownership on her part, that faith is required of her in this incidence as well."

1. Abraham as an Intercessor:

- **Concern for Others:** Abraham, recalling the promise in Genesis 12:3 to be a blessing to all, demonstrates his concern for others, particularly those potentially innocent in Sodom and Gomorrah. "The second thing I think we learn from this is that Abraham will continue to indicate his role of intercession, intercession on behalf of others, and that he shows his care and interest for others."
- **Bargaining with God:** Abraham's intercession takes the form of a negotiation with God, progressively reducing the required number of righteous individuals to spare the cities. "Now, Abraham brings to bear here a series of requests asking the Lord in his investigation if it's not right to preserve the cities because they are righteous, and we can understand this word righteous as innocent."
- **Compassion:** Abraham's intercession is motivated by compassion, even for his nephew Lot. Mathews says, "what we can say is that Abraham is a man of compassion toward Lot, even though he could have been angry against Lot and could have well said to Lot, see, I told you so, kind of response."

1. God's Justice and Mercy:

- **Investigation and Inquiry:** God's investigation of the outcry against Sodom demonstrates that He is not acting capriciously but rather seeking to understand the depth of the city's wickedness. Mathews says, "God in accordance with what we have found in chapter 1 of Genesis and chapter 3 and chapter 11... that although there is one God, there is a plurality within that unity...the Lord is not acting capriciously or unjustly, but rather, what He does is inquire. He investigates. He wants to know what is the nature of this outcry and what is its severity."
- **Balance of Justice and Mercy:** God's actions reveal His commitment to both justice and mercy. The lecture emphasizes that God does not just destroy everything, but allows an escape for the innocent (Lot and his family). "So, there is a third option, sparing the innocent, Lot, but bringing judgment against the wicked."
- **God's Character as the Answer:** Mathews emphasizes that Abraham is meant to learn about God's character and that this relationship is crucial in the face of questions about God's actions. "The only answer really for Abraham is just knowing the Lord and His character."

1. Contrasts Between Abraham and Lot:

- **Dwelling and Community:** Abraham resides outside of the city of Hebron, whereas Lot is deeply integrated into Sodom's city life. "The impression you have from chapter 19 is that Lot has become so, up to this point, Such an integrated part to the city of Sodom that he can be found at the gateway of the city. Whereas Abraham is dwelling outside of the city of Hebron."
- **Hospitality:** While both show hospitality, Abraham's welcome is characterized by immediate action and humility, whereas Lot's is more reactive and less discerning.
- **Compromise:** The lecture highlights how Lot had become compromised by living in Sodom, even though 2 Peter portrays him as a righteous man tormented by the wickedness around him. Mathews says, "...Lot was a righteous man. He was not totally sold out to the vileness, but he had compromised...compromise can lead even to catastrophe when it comes to compromising with wickedness."
- **Response to Destruction:** Abraham's commitment is to trust in God's promise to his line, even when witnessing the destruction of Lot's home city, whereas Lot struggles to leave Sodom and later suffers the consequences of compromise and fear.
- Abraham is remembered by God, whereas Lot is spared because of God's relationship to Abraham. "Verse 29 tells us that when God destroyed the cities of the plain, He remembered Abraham. What's important about that is that it doesn't say He remembered Lot."
- **Significance of Incest and the Moabites and Ammonites**The incestuous relationship of Lot with his daughters leads to the creation of two people groups, the Moabites and the Ammonites, who become enemies of Israel. Mathews explains, "The implication is that if he had not been drunk and thinking rightly in his mind, then certainly he would have resisted this...And then again, we have a contrast between the beginnings of Israel's legacy, the work of God in a special way, bringing about the birth of Isaac, and their connection to Abraham. The legacy, however, of Lot ended most despicably."

Important Points:

- **Manifestation of the Lord:** The lecture clarifies that the appearance of the Lord as a man is not an incarnation but a manifestation of his presence. "This is a manifestation, an appearance, what we have with the Lord as a man. Not an incarnation. He has not taken on the nature of humanity such as we find with our Lord Jesus Christ."
- **Symbolism of Salt:** Lot's wife turning into a pillar of salt is both a historical event and a symbol of looking back, or being unwilling to let go of a compromised life. Mathews notes, "...it is striking that even today, pillars of salt are found at the southern tip of the Dead Sea."
- **The Lesson of Compromise:** The story of Lot serves as a warning about the dangers of compromising with wickedness.
- **The Third Option:** Abraham's binary view (either everyone is saved or everyone is destroyed) is challenged by a third option of saving the righteous and judging the wicked.

Conclusion:

Dr. Mathews' analysis of Genesis 18-19 emphasizes the importance of a right relationship with God, characterized by hospitality, intercession, and trust. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah illustrates God's character, highlighting both His justice and His mercy. It serves as a reminder of the consequences of compromise with wickedness and the importance of looking toward God, not towards the world, for direction and safety. The lecture also emphasizes how this story is meant to grow and strengthen understanding of God's covenantal relationship with Abraham.

4. Study Guide: Mathews, Genesis, Session 14, Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18-19)

Genesis 18-19: Sodom and Gomorrah Study Guide

Short Answer Quiz

1. Describe the initial interaction between Abraham and the three visitors in Genesis 18.
2. How do the identities of the three visitors unfold in Genesis 18?
3. What is Sarah's initial reaction to the news that she will have a son? What is significant about the Lord's response to her?
4. Why is the Lord willing to share his plans regarding Sodom with Abraham? What does this reveal about their relationship?
5. What is the essence of Abraham's intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah?
6. How does the behavior of the men of Sodom toward Lot's visitors reflect their wickedness?
7. What is Lot's initial response to the threat against his guests? How does this contrast with Abraham's hospitality in the previous chapter?
8. What is the significance of the angel's command for Lot's family to not look back and not stop in the plain?
9. Explain the events that lead to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.
10. What is the legacy of Lot's descendants, and how is this contrasted with Abraham's legacy?

Answer Key

1. Abraham welcomes the three visitors with great hospitality, hurrying to greet them, providing water for their feet, and preparing a meal for them. This shows his humility and generosity towards strangers.
2. Initially identified as men, one of the three is revealed to be the Lord (Yahweh), and the other two are angels. This is a manifestation of the Lord's presence, not an incarnation.

3. Sarah laughs to herself, expressing doubt because she is past the age of childbearing. The Lord's response, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" emphasizes that nothing is impossible for God.
4. The Lord reveals his plan to Abraham because of their close relationship and Abraham's role in the covenant. This demonstrates that Abraham is a friend and confidant of God, entrusted with knowledge of his plans.
5. Abraham intercedes for Sodom by bargaining with the Lord, asking if the righteous could be spared along with the wicked, and gradually reducing the number of righteous individuals needed to save the city.
6. The men of Sodom surround Lot's house and demand that he bring out the visitors so that they may "know" them, which is a metaphor for sexual relations. Their behavior demonstrates a total disregard for hospitality and moral values.
7. Lot offers his own virgin daughters to the men of Sodom instead of his guests. While this does show that he values hospitality, his actions are a departure from the righteous behavior of Abraham.
8. The explicit command is a call to flee Sodom, but it is implied that they should also reject the ways of life that they had taken up in Sodom and the sinful behaviors of the people there.
9. After Lot and his family flee, the Lord rains down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah, destroying the cities because of their wickedness, but preserving Lot and his family due to God's covenant with Abraham.
10. Lot's descendants, the Moabites and Ammonites, were born through incest, becoming traditional enemies of Israel. This contrasts with the legacy of Abraham, who is a key figure in God's promise for Israel.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the contrasting characters of Abraham and Lot, focusing on their responses to visitors and their relationship with the cities they inhabit. How do these contrasts serve as a lesson to readers?
2. Explore the significance of Abraham's intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah. How does this incident demonstrate his growing relationship with God, and what does it reveal about God's justice and mercy?

3. Discuss the role of hospitality in Genesis 18 and 19. How does the treatment of visitors serve as a reflection of the moral character of Abraham and Lot's respective communities?
4. Examine the ways in which the narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah serves as both a specific historical event and as a more symbolic narrative of sin, judgment, and salvation.
5. How does the story of Lot's escape and his daughters' actions demonstrate the consequences of compromise and the complexities of human nature in the face of extreme circumstances?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Yahweh:** The personal covenant name of God in the Hebrew Bible, often translated as "the LORD" in English Bibles (small caps).
- **Intercession:** The act of intervening or pleading on behalf of another. Abraham's role in pleading for Sodom is a key example.
- **Manifestation:** A visible or physical appearance of the divine, such as the appearance of the Lord and angels as men. Not to be confused with incarnation.
- **Hospitality:** The generous and welcoming reception of guests or strangers. Highly valued in ancient cultures, especially in the ancient Near East.
- **Righteous:** In this context, referring to those who are just and innocent. Abraham's concern is that the righteous would not be punished with the wicked.
- **Justice:** The quality of being fair and equitable in judgement and dealing, a fundamental attribute of God.
- **Mercy:** Compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm.
- **Sodom and Gomorrah:** The wicked cities of the plain that become symbols of moral corruption, and the destruction that results from sin.
- **Ruach:** The Hebrew word that can mean wind, breath, or spirit. It is used in the account of the flood and can refer to the Holy Spirit of God.
- **Zoar:** A small city to which Lot was permitted to flee from Sodom and Gomorrah.

5. FAQs on Mathews, Genesis, Session 14, Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18-19), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Genesis 18-19: Abraham, Sodom, and Gomorrah

1. **Who were the three visitors that came to Abraham in Genesis 18, and what was their significance?** The three visitors were initially presented as men, but one of them is identified as the Lord (Yahweh) and the other two are later revealed to be angels. This is understood as a manifestation of God, not an incarnation. This encounter is significant because it demonstrates a closer, more intimate relationship developing between God and Abraham, setting the stage for the subsequent events in Sodom and Gomorrah. It also showcases Abraham's exemplary hospitality and humility.
2. **How did Abraham's hospitality towards the three visitors contrast with Lot's actions in Sodom?** Abraham welcomed the three visitors with great eagerness, humility and actively provided for their needs. In contrast, Lot was found at the city gate of Sodom, indicating his integration with the community. While Lot also offered hospitality, the text suggests a moral contrast between Abraham's righteousness and Lot's compromised state, which is seen in Lot's willingness to offer his daughters to protect the male visitors, although they were not aware of the divine nature of their visitors. Abraham is depicted as dwelling outside the city, while Lot had assimilated into Sodom.
3. **What is the significance of Sarah's laughter, and how does the Lord respond to it?** Sarah laughed to herself at the idea of having a child in her old age, given that she was past menopause. This laughter reflects human limitations and doubts regarding the impossible. The Lord, however, confronts her, indicating that nothing is too difficult for Him, emphasizing His power and ability to fulfill His promises despite seeming impossibilities. This highlights that Sarah, along with Abraham, must walk in faith to receive the promises of God.
4. **How does the dialogue between God and Abraham about Sodom reveal the nature of their relationship?** The dialogue between God and Abraham signifies a deepening of their relationship, where God reveals His intentions to Abraham, making him a confidant. This is an indication of trust and friendship. The dialogue also sets the stage for Abraham's role as an intercessor and demonstrates his care for others as a vehicle for blessing as God has promised.

5. **What does the story of Sodom and Gomorrah teach us about God's justice and mercy?** The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah demonstrates God's justice in punishing wickedness and moral corruption. However, it also showcases His mercy through Abraham's intercession, where God agrees to spare the cities if a certain number of righteous people were found. Ultimately, God spares Lot and his family not because they are righteous in and of themselves, but due to His promise to Abraham and His own mercy. This shows God's justice and mercy are not opposing forces but work together.
6. **What does Lot's compromised behavior and his family's escape reveal about the dangers of assimilation and compromise?** Lot's presence in Sodom and his hesitation to leave, despite the impending doom, reveals the dangers of compromising one's values and becoming too integrated with wickedness. His wife's looking back and turning into a pillar of salt emphasizes the need to completely reject the ways of a sinful life. It demonstrates the importance of making a clean break and fleeing from moral corruption.
7. **How does the narrative contrast Abraham's righteous intercession with the later incestuous behavior of Lot's daughters?** The stark contrast underscores the idea that, while Abraham and Lot were related, they had vastly different relationships with God and different moral choices. Abraham, a man of righteousness, compassion, and intercession, is contrasted with Lot's family's moral collapse. The actions of Lot's daughters is a further depiction of the complete moral corruption of Sodom and Gomorrah and how Lot's family are a product of this environment. This further highlights Abraham's faithfulness and the consequences of failing to live according to God's way.
8. **What is the ultimate takeaway of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in relation to the overall theme of God's covenant with Abraham?** The narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah highlights key aspects of the covenant between God and Abraham. It underscores God's commitment to both justice and mercy, showing that His covenant extends not only to Abraham but also to his descendants and even those connected to him, like Lot. God remembers his promise to Abraham, and because of this, he rescues Lot. The story reveals that the blessing of Abraham extends to those connected to him, and God is just in his judgement and merciful in his deliverance.