

Community Bible Church

The Book of Genesis

Genesis 18-19

The story in **Genesis chapters 18 and 19** presents a compelling narrative of contrasts between **Abraham** and his nephew **Lot**. In the New Testament Abraham is said to be a "*friend of God*" while Lot is a "*friend of the world.*" **Chapter 18** begins with the Lord (Yahweh) coming to Abraham while he was "*sitting near his tent door by the oaks of Mamre in the heat of day*". However, **chapter 19** opens with angelic visitors coming to Lot while he was "*sitting in the gate of Sodom*" where he shouldn't have been.

Chapter 18 begins with another Christophany and describes Abraham's worshipful hospitality and intercessory prayer, while **chapter 19**, in stark contrast, describes brimstone and fire from the Lord raining down out of heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah in judgment.

These two chapters form a literary unit that describes the details leading up to God's judgment on the "*cities of the plain.*" This week's lesson will focus more on reading these lengthy passages, and understanding some of the principles of biblical interpretation. For example, one might assume the leading characters in this two-chapter narrative are Abraham, Sarah, and Lot. However, in a sense, the primary focus is actually on the actions of God, and He is put forth as the predominant player in the story. The following discussion of principles used interpreting the Old Testament might be helpful. Hermeneutics is the study of the rules used to interpret the Bible, and here is one aspect of hermeneutics as applied to Genesis.

One can view the narrative material in the Old Testament as having **three levels**. The **top level** includes the universal plan of God as worked out in redemptive history. The focus is on God and his overall role in carrying out His plan for mankind. This week's lesson is more about God than it is about man.

The **middle level** focuses on the history of Israel and Abraham's role, through his offspring, in the development of this nation. We see features of this aspect in this week's lesson.

The **bottom level** includes all of the small details and actions of each narrative unit that makes up the stories in these chapters. This is often where the reader focuses most of his attention, at the expense of the top two levels. Lets see how this plays out in **Genesis chapters 18 and 19**.

1. In **18:2** the "*three men*" are considered to be two angels and the preincarnate appearance of Jesus Himself. From **18:1-8**, give a brief description of Abraham's reception of these "men."

2. Following this very intimate, loving and hospitable encounter with Abraham, the apparent reason for their appearance seems to be explained in **18:9-16**. What was that reason?
3. From this entire passage in **18:1-16** who appears to be the predominant, or featured, figure in this narrative? Are the main themes of this passage the importance of hospitality, the skepticism of geriatric childbirth, or is there a greater and more grand over-arching theme in the narrative?
4. Read **18:13-14** again. These are words spoken directly by Jesus. What theme or attribute is He advancing to Abraham with His words?
5. Read the entire lengthy narrative found in **18:17-33**. From **18:20-21**, Jesus explains the second main reason that He came to Abraham. What was that reason and what did He intend to do?
6. Many see **18:23-33** as a very personal, humble, and sincere intercessory prayer of Abraham for justice in dealing with Sodom. Do you see any lessons on prayer in this passage, and how did God eventually answer this prayer in **chapter 19**?
7. In **chapter 19**, only the two angels travel to Sodom to meet with Lot. Sodom and the adjacent city of Gomorrah are believed to have been located just south of the Dead Sea, although there is no definitive archeological evidence for this. Read **19:1-11** write a brief summary of the outrageous events in this passage. What occurs next in **19:12-14**?
8. From the dramatic events of **19:15-29**, write a one sentence summary of this passage. Can you briefly identify the three levels of the narrative which were discussed earlier?