

Why Exactly Did God Destroy Sodom and Gomorrah?

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God has a reason for everything He does. Each and every action He takes has purpose, is right, and good. Through a limited, worldly, human perspective, that can seem difficult to accept. Certain incidents in the Bible seem to contradict this truth, though that is usually because they are taken out of context, and a little prayer and study often illuminates the Lord's purposes.

In Genesis, during the days of Abraham, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were powerful cities that God wiped off the earth in a single evening. Careful study of the Bible reveals these two cities devolved into debauchery and violence. There was nothing they would not do, no person they were not willing to violate, and no chance from God to repent they wanted to take. God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as punishment for their wickedness, their lack of repentance, and to stop their evil from spreading.

What Happened at Sodom and Gomorrah?

The full account of what happened to the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah is in Genesis chapters eighteen and nineteen, with a brief mention earlier in chapter thirteen. Abraham travelled many miles in the company of his nephew Lot. Both men prospered, which led to conflict between their shepherds. They needed to cease their sojourns.

“And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar” ([Genesis](#)

[13:10](#)). This land was around the city of Sodom. While Lot started out just wanting to live around the city, he eventually moved in and raised his family there. After a period of time, God determined to pour out His judgment of the cities due to their wickedness. Abraham negotiated with God that if he could find ten righteous people in two cities, He would not destroy the cities. However, Abraham could not even find that many, and the only ones who would be spared were Lot and his family.

When the time came, the sun rose, “Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of [heaven](#). And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground ... behold, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace” ([Genesis 19:24-25](#), 28b). God made that valley uninhabitable, and the area that Christian archeologists and theologians believe is the location of the cities still has no wildlife, and no vegetation growing there.

Why Did God Destroy Sodom and Gomorrah?

There are hints in chapter thirteen about the nature of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. When the Lord addressed His decision initially, He said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know” ([Genesis 18:20-21](#)).

Not only were they committing offenses against God, but they were hurting the cities and people around them. The Bible often refers to the sensuality of Sodom and Gomorrah, meaning its citizens were obsessed with indulging in sins of the flesh. Their sexual sins are what most people know about, but it can be inferred they indulged in many other carnal sins. The citizens of Sodom wanted to assault the two angels who came to Sodom. In fact, their drive to commit violent sexual assault was so great the Bible records, “Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door down” ([Genesis 19:9b](#)). They wanted to beat Lot and break down his door to assault his guests.

Many people point to several passages in Genesis to try and pinpoint which specific sins pushed the cities over the edge. How were they different from every other nation to exist that is full of sinners, and what led to them being wiped off the map.

An interesting passage in the Book of Isaiah gets to the root of Sodom and Gomorrah’s evil. While they indulged in every vice, the state of their hearts were permanently set against the Lord. Isaiah gave a prophecy against Judah and Jerusalem, “because their speech and their deeds are against the Lord, defying his glorious presence, For the look on their faces bears witness against them; they proclaim their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves” ([Isaiah 3:8-9](#)).

During the time of Isaiah, Israel openly, proudly, and knowingly defied God, and the prophet specified this behavior was identical to the actions that ultimately condemned Sodom and Gomorrah. While their willingness to assault strangers was deeply evil, the hardened hearts of the people of these cities blinded them to the opportunity to repent and change. Their pride set them forever against God.

Moving forward after Genesis, Sodom and Gomorrah – though more often the former – are mentioned as a point of reference for wickedness. Has Israel fallen into dissolution? The prophet will compare them to these cities. Jeremiah did it several times in his writings during a particular low point in Israel’s history, “But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns from his evil; all of them have become like Sodom to me, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah” ([Jeremiah 23:14](#)). Isaiah predicted the downfall of Babylon to be like the downfall of Sodom and Gomorrah.



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Why Did God Save Lot's Family?

Abraham loved his nephew Lot and did not want to see his nephew destroyed. Many people assume that Lot was only rescued because of the intervention of his uncle, however, there is evidence God rescued Lot for other reasons.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Peter expounds on why God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah but spared Lot; “if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials” ([2 Peter 2:6-9a](#)). Lot saw all the evil around him, and it bothered him. He lived among the wicked, disturbed by their

behavior, and tried to spare God's messengers from assault. For his [faith](#), God rescued Lot, though his wife did not make it out.

The angels warned Lot's family not to look back for two reasons. First, the extent of God's destruction was so great they had to flee to a smaller city some distance away not to get swept away. Second, looking back meant regretting the loss of the cities. The righteous Lot understood that despite the difficulties facing him without a home, getting to keep his life and his standing with God was worth much more than anything the cities of vice offered. Unfortunately, Lot's wife had pangs of regret, "But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt" ([Genesis 19:26](#)).

The story of Lot's wife is an important lesson. She was warned of the consequences of looking back, of desiring the comforts of a sinful place over the mercy of God, and she suffered the consequences the angels told her would come. Many ignore the warnings of the Bible, preferring sin and worldly convenience over righteousness and God's will.

Isn't It Cruel for God to Destroy a Whole City?

God did not just turn his eye to Sodom and Gomorrah and decide they were not good enough for him to love them. They indulged in every wickedness and refused to turn their hearts to the Lord and repent. When Lot tried to convince them to do the right thing just once, they called him judgmental, and tried to assault him too. This situation is similar to when God sent the flood, sparing Noah. The people were obsessed with evil, meditating only on sin, and refused to turn to God for forgiveness, despite warnings.

What happened at Sodom and Gomorrah serves as both a warning for all people, and a prophetic image of what will happen one day when Jesus returns in His full glory; "Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all — so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed" ([Luke 17:28-30](#)). Here, Jesus warned His followers that all nations will face the judgment of God, poured out.

As the righteous King, He can, and He has given humanity millennia to turn to Him in repentance. Just as He was willing to spare Sodom and Gomorrah if He could find ten righteous men between the two cities, He stays His hand and invites everyone into a relationship with Him, sparing them from His judgment. God is not willing that anyone should perish, and has His hand outstretched, asking everyone to choose to have a relationship with Him forever.

Sources

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