

How did God destroy Sodom and Gomorrah? Recent meteoric evidence may prove the biblical account

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The story of Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction is among the more well-known tales of the Old Testament. It is also included in the Qur'an (11:74–83 and 29:28–35) and is cited by Jesus as a clear example of God's judgment against sin ([Matthew 10:14–15](#)).

For a long time, it was presumed that something like the great earthquake that rocked the region around 1900 BCE was the cause of the two cities' destruction, turning it from a fertile land with plenty of fresh water into a barren waste. While this account never fit all that well with the biblical description, it at least offered a plausible explanation for what might have happened and why those who witnessed it could have passed down that account in the fashion we have today.

Recent research, however, offers another explanation.

A meteor may have destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah

After fifteen years of excavations and study, archaeologist Christopher R. Moore and his team found evidence that, around 1650 BCE, [a massive meteor](#) burst through earth's atmosphere near the ancient city of Tall el-Hammam—the location where Sodom and Gomorrah are commonly thought to have existed—and exploded 2.5 miles above the ground, raining fiery debris on the cities below.

The ensuing blast was roughly a thousand times more powerful than the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, and everything in its wake would have been instantly incinerated as air temperatures rose to more than 3,600 degrees Fahrenheit. The shockwave that followed a few seconds later raged at speeds of up to 740 miles per hour as deadly winds destroyed whatever the initial blast did not.

Ultimately, there's no way to know this side of heaven if the meteor is what God used to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah or if it was something else entirely, but the plausibility of that scenario offers us an important reminder for how we should look at the Bible today.

Is the Bible true?

As Christians, we don't need historical evidence to believe that the Bible is true (See Dr. Jim Denison's "[Why do we believe the Bible is actually the word of God?](#)") But that doesn't mean it's not welcome when it happens.

The meteor that very well could have destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah is far from the only time history has backed up the Bible.

Daniel's prophetic description of events in chapters 7–12, for example, is so accurate that it forms the primary reason many scholars today date the book to the second century BCE rather than when Scripture claims Daniel actually wrote it.

The Pool of Bethesda in [John 5](#) was thought to be a myth until it was uncovered exactly where the Bible said it would be, and now it serves as a common stop on tours through Jerusalem.

Pontius Pilate was considered by many to be a fictional character until a Roman inscription documenting his office and life was discovered.

And that's just to name a few examples.

The truth is that regardless of how many times history proves the Bible to be correct, there will always be enough gaps between what Scripture describes and our ability to prove it that those who want to doubt its veracity can find reasons to do so.

But just because holes in our understanding exist does not mean that the fault is with Scripture rather than us. When weighed against evidence to the contrary, the balance tips heavily in favor of the Bible's veracity. Believing that God's word is true is the most logical approach to take, even if arguments can be made to the contrary.

At the end of the day, though, what Abraham Lincoln once said of the Bible remains the best advice for us today: "Take all that you can of this book upon reason, and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a happier man."

Adopt that approach today, and you will learn just how right he was.

What did you think of this article?

If what you've just read inspired, challenged, or encouraged you today, or if you have further questions or general feedback, please share your thoughts with us.

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Sodom and Gomorrah

By Derek Thomas

Genesis 19 is unseemly stuff! The kind of thing we don't want to be found reading in public on Sunday mornings when our mothers are present! Sodomy, rape, and who knows what else? Do we close our eyes and think nice thoughts rather than dwell on what this story is really about? And coming so quickly after the moving prayer of chapter 18 — what in the world are we to make of it?

Assumptions are that the sin here is homosexuality of a violent nature. Genesis 19:5 simply says that the men of Sodom demanded, "Bring them out to us, that we may know them." Modern attempts to ameliorate the text have suggested that the verb "to know," which occurs almost a thousand times in the Hebrew text, rarely implies sexual contact (some estimate less than ten occurrences). It might therefore be no more than a "let's get acquainted!"

Hardly! Moses has set this passage up to create the expectation of something sinister. In chapter 13 we have been informed that the men of Sodom are "wicked" and "great sinners" (13:13). And what had instigated Abraham's moving prayer for his nephew in the previous chapter had been the fact that the sin of the men of Sodom had been "very grave" (18:20). And the nineteenth chapter ends with the total destruction of the city of Sodom together with "what grew on the ground" (19:25). This is hardly a setting for a misunderstanding in fraternal relations! Something really bad happens here that necessitates the unusual response of God's holy judgment. And Jude makes it clear: they "indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire" (Jude 7).

Like the incident in Judges 19 (at Gibeah), Genesis 19 is a record of homosexual rape. True, we cannot get from here to an outright condemnation of homosexuality itself — even though this is something that the Bible condemns elsewhere (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26–27). The incident here is violent and merciless. Lot's offer of his daughters only shows how ethically compromised he had become in choosing to live near this city. Perhaps he had reasoned that the men of Sodom would not be interested in them and leave it at that, or that his need to protect his visitors at all costs outweighed his fatherly concern for the sanctity of his daughters. Either way, Lot is a man not to be trusted! He had become shaped by his culture, and Moses' description of the incident highlights the danger of cultural accommodation.

Nor did Lot's folly end with him. The chapter closes with the pathetic details of his life in a cave in the hills of Zoar with his two daughters. His wife had capitulated to the surrounding culture and her sentiments for it calcified her longing forever. In desperation for male succession, Lot's daughters engage in acts of incest, further compromising ethical guidelines. Sin had passed from father to children in a context where the home had long since abandoned any semblance of ordered worship and devoted behavior. The deed conceived two of Israel's future enemies: the Moabites and the Ammonites. Sin has passed from one generation to another.

What are we to learn from this sordid tale? Several things: First, the calcification of Lot's wife teaches us the lesson Jesus reinforced: that those who attempt to save their lives in this world will lose it: "Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it." (Luke 17:32–33). Her lusting for a city doomed to destruction by God showed that she had lost sight of God entirely, blinded by the allurements of the big city. Second, unlike the tale of Orpheus and Euridice, Lot did not turn back to glimpse his wife's longings for Sodom. He survived the ordeal, though he would thereafter pay a heavy price for the seed (literally, as it so happens) he sowed in his daughters' lives. God saved him from the conflagration of Sodom, but the consequences of his parenting were allowed to continue. He had himself initially hesitated to flee (Gen. 19:16). The beguiling environment in which he had sojourned had weaved its potent spells on him too, and it was only the mercy of God that delivered him. Sin is a powerful enemy that robs us of clear vision and clear thinking. Extricating ourselves from it is both painful and costly. But extricate from it we must! Lot's dalliance with the ungodly world had reaped a harvest of pain. It is ever thus. Third, the tale is a vivid portrayal of Paul's words: "Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness" (Rom. 11:22). God is kind to Lot and severe to Lot's wife. The two attributes are twin realities ensuring that both aspects of His nature, love and holiness, are given due consideration. We dare not play one off against the other. And on the cross, we see both: Jesus dying under His wrath because of God's love for His people.

It is this, at the end of the day, that we dwell on: God's unimaginable grace to a sinful world in raising up Abraham, a faithful intercessor, for the purposes of a story that has yet to unfold in all its wonder and glory!

**Question: "What is the story of Abraham and Lot?"**

Answer: The story of Abraham (originally Abram) and Lot begins with Abraham's father, Terah. Terah left Ur of the Chaldeans and traveled west to Haran with Abraham; Abraham's wife, Sarah (originally Sarai); and Lot, Abraham's nephew. Terah died in Haran (Genesis 11:32).

In Genesis 12:1-3, Abraham received a calling from the Lord: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." This promise included a land, a nation, and a people. Abraham obeyed, taking Sarah and Lot with him, along with their servants and possessions, and settled at Shechem (Genesis 12:6).

After a brief time in Egypt during a famine (Genesis 12:10-20), they returned to Canaan. There, Abraham's and Lot's servants were involved in arguments over grazing areas for their large herds of livestock. Abraham and Lot agreed to part ways, with Abraham giving Lot first choice of land. Lot chose the land of the plain of Jordan, near Sodom and Gomorrah, because of the rich pastureland there. Abraham settled near Hebron (Genesis 13). Lot's choice proved to be a foolish one, as the wickedness of Sodom was very great (verse 13). The grass was greener near Sodom, but greener is not always better.

An alliance of four kings attacked Sodom, and Lot and many others were taken captive. Upon hearing the news, Abraham led a force of 318 men to rescue Lot. As Abraham returned victoriously from the battle, he gave a tenth of the spoils to a priest named Melchizedek (Genesis 14). God then renewed His covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15), which included the promise of a son.

Abraham and Lot's story reveals how God can call anyone to accomplish great purposes. It also illustrates the folly of making decisions based solely on external appearances. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death" (Proverbs 14:12). The path to Sodom seemed right to Lot, but it almost cost him his life.

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Question: "What was the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah?"

Answer: The biblical account of Sodom and Gomorrah is recorded in Genesis chapters 18-19. Genesis chapter 18 records the Lord and two angels coming to speak with Abraham. The Lord informed Abraham that "the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous" (Genesis 18:20). Verses 22-33 record Abraham pleading with the Lord to have mercy on Sodom and Gomorrah because Abraham's nephew, Lot, and his family lived in Sodom.

Genesis chapter 19 records the two angels, disguised as human men, visiting Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot met the angels in the city square and urged them to stay at his house. The angels agreed. The Bible then informs us, "Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom — both young and old — surrounded the house. They called to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them'" (Genesis 19:4–5). The angels then proceed to blind the men surrounding the house and urge Lot and his family to flee from the cities to escape the wrath that God was about to deliver. Lot and his family flee the city, and then "the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah — from the LORD out of the heavens. Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities..." (Genesis 19:24).

In light of the passage, the most common response to the question "What was the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah?" is that it was homosexuality. That is how the term *sodomy* came to be used to refer to anal sex between two men, whether consensual or forced. Clearly, homosexuality was part of why God destroyed the two cities. The men of Sodom and Gomorrah wanted to perform homosexual gang rape on the two angels (who were disguised as men). At the same time, it is not biblical to say that homosexuality was the exclusive reason why God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were definitely not exclusive in terms of the sins in which they indulged.

Ezekiel 16:49-50 declares, "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me..." The Hebrew word translated "detestable" refers to something that is morally disgusting and is the exact same word used in Leviticus 18:22 that refers to homosexuality as an "abomination." Similarly, Jude 7 declares, "...Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion." So, again, while homosexuality was not the only sin in which the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah indulged, it does appear to be the primary reason for the destruction of the cities.

Those who attempt to explain away the biblical condemnations of homosexuality claim that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was inhospitality. The men of Sodom and Gomorrah were certainly being inhospitable. There is probably nothing more inhospitable than homosexual gang rape. But to say God completely destroyed two cities and all their inhabitants for being inhospitable clearly misses the point. While Sodom and Gomorrah were guilty of many other horrendous sins, homosexuality was the principle reason God poured fiery sulfur on the cities, completely destroying them and all of their inhabitants. To this day, the area where Sodom and Gomorrah were located remains a desolate wasteland. Sodom and Gomorrah serve as a powerful example of how God feels about

sin in general, and homosexuality specifically.

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