



GENESIS 18:16–21

SHALL I HIDE FROM ABRAHAM?

OPENING ALIGNMENT QUESTION

What should we do with the knowledge that God has revealed judgment is coming?

Curiosity?

Fear?

Pride?

“They deserve what they are going to get”?

Or the response we are about to see in Abraham?

■ WHERE WE ARE

The Chapter Turns

GENESIS 18:1–15

- YHWH appears at the tent
- Abraham prepares a meal
- Sarah hears of Isaac
- “Is anything too hard for the LORD?”

GENESIS 18:16–33

- The visitors rise
- The gaze turns toward Sodom
- The outcry has reached God
- Abraham begins to intercede

■ BACKGROUND

Abraham and Sodom — The Long History

GENESIS 13

Abraham separates
from Sodom

GENESIS 14

Abraham rescues
people from Sodom

GENESIS 18

Abraham intercedes
concerning Sodom

SEPARATION WITHOUT INDIFFERENCE

Separation from wickedness never required indifference toward the people caught inside it.

■ INTRODUCTION

Why Does Abraham Need to Know?

“Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?”

- God is not confused
- He is not asking the angels for advice
- Abraham does not govern Sodom
- Abraham does not live in Sodom
- Verse 19 gives us the answer

MAIN THOUGHT

God reveals His coming judgment to Abraham because Abraham was chosen not merely to receive blessing, but to establish a household that knows and walks in the way of YHWH — righteousness and justice.

God is teaching the future father of a nation how the Judge of all the earth exercises justice.

And the knowledge God gives immediately creates responsibility.

■ SECTION MAP

The Movement of the Passage



And immediately after this section: REVELATION → INTERCESSION

18:16

The visitors rise and look toward Sodom

18:17–19

YHWH explains why Abraham should know

18:20–21

The outcry, and the divine investigation

■ GENESIS 18:16

The View Toward Sodom

16 Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way.

NKJV

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

- The meal ends — the encounter does not
- The hinge between the two halves of the chapter
- Abraham keeps walking, and hears what he did not know

■ HEBREW INSIGHT

Looked Toward Sodom

שָׁקַף

shaqaph (shah-KAHF)

to look out, look down,
to overlook from above

THE NARRATIVE FRAME

- Genesis 18:16 — the gaze turns toward Sodom
- Genesis 19:28 — Abraham looks toward Sodom again
- Before: a functioning society
- After: smoke rising from the land

■ KINGDOM FRAMEWORK

Reality Over Perception

LOT SAW — GENESIS 13:10

- Water
- Fertility
- Economic possibility
- Opportunity

GOD SAW — GENESIS 13:13

- Exceedingly wicked
- Sinful against the LORD
- An outcry rising to heaven
- Sin of enormous weight

**Normal does not mean right. Prosperous does not mean approved.
Successful does not mean aligned. Stable does not mean safe.**

■ HIDDEN GEM

Separation Without Indifference

- He never joined Sodom
- He rescued Sodom's captives
- He refused Sodom's wealth
- He will now plead for Sodom's people

If our understanding of judgment makes us excited about people being destroyed rather than urgent about people being saved, something has gone wrong in us.

■ GENESIS 18:17–18

Why God Tells Abraham

*17 And the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing,
18 since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?”*

NKJV

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

- Divine deliberation we are permitted to overhear
- Two reasons Abraham is brought into the knowledge
- The promise is restated before judgment is revealed

■ GENESIS 18:19

Covenant Privilege Carries Covenant Purpose

19 “For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”

NKJV

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

- I have known him — covenant choice, not mere awareness
- In order that — election carries purpose
- Keep the way of the LORD — righteousness and justice

■ HEBREW INSIGHT

Deliberation, Not Uncertainty

כָּסָה

kasah (kah-SAH)

to cover, to conceal, to hide
“Am I hiding from Abraham?”

הָיוּ יִהְיֶה

hayo yihyeh

infinitive absolute + finite verb
“Abraham shall surely become”

The promise is settled. The question is what kind of people that nation will become.

■ HEBREW INSIGHT

“For I Have Known Him”

יָדָע

yada (yah-DAH)

to know — here, to recognize,
to choose, to enter covenant

AMOS 3:2

*“You only have I known of all the
families of the earth...”*

- God knew the other nations existed
- The language is covenant recognition
- “I have chosen him”
- And then: “in order that...”

■ COVENANT PURPOSE

The Blessing Was Never Meant to Terminate



“You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house...” — Deuteronomy 6:6–7

- Not merely Abraham’s name
- Not merely ethnic identity
- Not merely the covenant sign
- They are to keep the way of the LORD

■ HEBREW INSIGHT

The Way of the LORD

דֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה

derekh YHWH (DEH-rekh)

way, road, path, manner of life

- Not merely doctrines about YHWH
- Not merely heritage connected to YHWH
- Not merely external identification
- A way (LIFE) that is walked

■ HEBREW INSIGHT

To Do Righteousness and Justice

צְדָקָה

tsedakah (tseh-dah-KAH)

righteousness, rightness,
right conduct

מִשְׁפָּט

mishpat (mish-PAHT)

justice, right judicial decision,
proper ordering of what is right

*“Righteousness and justice are the
foundation of Your throne...”*

Psalms 89:14

*“A King shall reign... and execute
judgment and righteousness in the
earth.”*

Jeremiah 23:5

■ CONTRAST

Two Ways to Build a Society

ABRAHAM'S HOUSEHOLD

THE WAY OF YHWH



RIGHTEOUSNESS



JUSTICE



BLESSING

SODOM

WICKEDNESS



OPPRESSION



OUTCRY



INVESTIGATION



JUDGMENT

■ DOCTRINAL NOTE

Covenant Guardrail

Verse 19 must not be used to turn the Abrahamic covenant into a works-based contract.

- Genesis 15 — God bound Himself to the promise
- Abraham does not earn the covenant by parenting well
- But covenant election includes purpose
- God's calling creates responsibility in those He calls

■ HIDDEN GEM

The Teacher Stands Under the Text First

- Before Abraham teaches justice, God teaches Abraham
- Before Abraham speaks of justice, he watches the Judge
- Before he teaches the way, he must know the character

**You cannot faithfully transmit what you refuse to learn.
We can become very good at teaching truths that have stopped
confronting us.**

■ GENESIS 18:20–21

The Cry God Hears

20 And the LORD said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave,

21 I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.”

NKJV

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

- The outcry against Sodom is great
- Their sin is very grave
- I will go down now and see — judicial investigation

■ HEBREW INSIGHT

The Outcry

זַעֲקָה / צַעֲקָה

zeaqah / tsaaqah (zeh-ah-KAH)

cry, outcry, cry of distress

THE SAME VOCABULARY

- Exodus 3:9 — the cry of Israel under oppression
- Exodus 22:22–23 — the widow and the fatherless
- Proverbs 21:13 — the cry of the poor
- Genesis 4:10 — the blood of Abel

■ LET SCRIPTURE ANSWER

What Exactly Was Sodom's Sin?

"This was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy..." — Ezekiel 16:49–50

PRIDE

**PROSPERITY
WITHOUT COMPASSION**

**NEGLECT OF
THE POOR**

ARROGANCE

**SEXUAL
ABOMINATION**

**VIOLENCE AND
OPPRESSION**

■ HEBREW INSIGHT

Their Sin Is Very Grave

כְּבִדָּה מְאֹד

kavedah meod

from k-b-d — weight, heaviness
their guilt carries enormous weight

**God's patience must never be
mistaken for God's approval.**

DIVINE PATIENCE

- Genesis 13:13 — exceedingly wicked
- Genesis 18:20 — the outcry is great
- Genesis 19 — judgment falls

“The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” — Genesis 15:16

“Because the sentence... is not executed speedily, the heart... is fully set in them to do evil.” — Ecclesiastes 8:11

■ KINGDOM PATTERN

Repetition Builds Reality



Sodom did not become Sodom in one afternoon.

■ GENESIS 18:21

“I Will Go Down Now and See”

DOES GOD NEED INFORMATION?

- YHWH knew Sarah laughed within herself
- That was eight verses earlier
- This is judicial language, not a deficit
- He does not judge from rumor

BABEL — GENESIS 11:5

REBELLION RISES



YHWH COMES DOWN



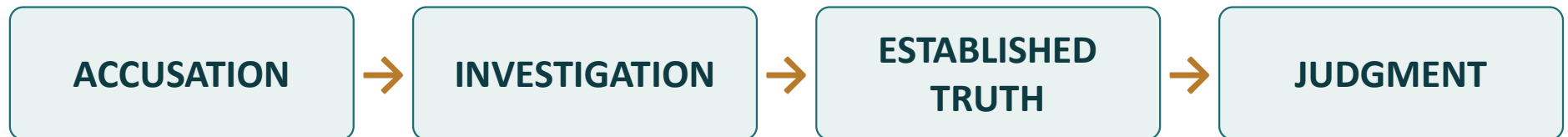
GOD SEES



GOD JUDGES

■ CROSS-REFERENCE

God Requires the Same Justice of His People



"Then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently."

Deuteronomy 13:14

"Then you shall inquire diligently."

Deuteronomy 17:4

If the omniscient Judge presents His judgment in the language of careful examination, how much more should limited people be slow to condemn?

■ HIDDEN GEM

The Judge Hears the Cry Before Abraham Does

- Abraham does not tell God about Sodom
- God tells Abraham
- The cries had already reached Him
- No victim is invisible because no human noticed

“How long, O Lord... until You judge and avenge our blood?” — Revelation 6:10
The outcry motif that begins with Abel still rises at the end of the Book.

■ MAJOR BIBLICAL PATTERN

Revelation Before Judgment

NOAH

God reveals the Flood before it comes

ABRAHAM

God reveals Sodom's coming judgment

MOSES

God reveals judgment on Egypt before the plagues

THE PROPHETS

God announces judgment before the armies arrive

THE CHURCH

Christ reveals His return and coming judgment

“Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.” — Amos 3:7

■ LUKE 17:28–30

The Days of Lot

“They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built... but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven...”

EATING

DRINKING

BUYING

SELLING

PLANTING

BUILDING

None of these activities is sinful.

That is precisely the point.

A society may continue functioning normally while being completely unaware of how near judgment is.

■ GUARDRAIL

What This Passage Does Not Prove

- Abraham is not a symbol of the Church
- Sodom is not a coded end-times cipher
- This text does not fix a Rapture chronology
- God does not owe modern believers hidden dates

**But it does establish what the New Testament reinforces:
God's people are not to live as though judgment will never come —
and knowledge of judgment creates responsibility.**

■ CHRIST CONNECTION

The Judge of All the Earth

*“The Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.”
John 5:22*

*“He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained.”
Acts 17:31*

**At the cross, righteousness and mercy meet.
Sin is not ignored. Justice is not discarded.
Christ bears the judgment for those who trust Him.**

■ THE LINE THROUGH THE PASSAGE

Revelation Creates Responsibility



“So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land... but I found no one.” — Ezekiel 22:30

- Abraham does not answer, “Good.”
- He approaches God
- He intercedes

■ BRING IT HOME

The Way of Sodom and the Way of YHWH

THE WAY OF SODOM

Pride and self-exaltation

Abundance without responsibility

Neglect of the poor and needy

Exploitation — strangers unsafe

Abomination became normalized

Their way produced an OUTCRY

THE WAY OF YHWH — GENESIS 18:19

Righteousness — tsedaqah

Blessing that moves outward

Justice — mishpat

Protection of the weak

God's character sets the standard

God's way produces BLESSING

■ BRING IT HOME

Two Ways of Life Are Being Built

WHERE DO WE WANT TO LIVE?

Not merely geographically — what way is defining our household?

THE WAY OF SODOM

Self → Pride → Indulgence → Injustice → Exploitation → Outcry → Judgment

THE WAY OF YHWH

Knowing God → Righteousness → Justice → Right treatment of others →
Blessing flowing outward

**You may not be able to determine the way your nation goes.
You can decide which way your household will walk.**

FINAL ALIGNMENT QUESTION

What am I doing with what God has already revealed?

The more penetrating question is not “how close are we?”

Abraham did not receive revelation so he could understand the future.

He received revelation so he could respond rightly in the present.

■ APPLICATION

Take It Home

- 1 Know the whole character of God — not only the attributes that comfort you.
- 2 Build a household around the way of the LORD, not merely around church identity.
- 3 Refuse to judge by appearance — normal, prosperous, and stable are not the same as approved.
- 4 Practice righteous justice — investigate before you condemn, at home and online.
- 5 Turn what God has revealed into intercession this week, and name the person you will pray for.

CLOSING

We know more than the people of Sodom knew. Christ has told us He is returning. Scripture has told us judgment is coming and how history ends. But God has not given us that revelation so we can become experts in what happens next. He has told us so we will live differently now.

The man who is about to ask, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" is first being shown what the Judge of all the earth is actually like.

■ NEXT: GENESIS 18:22–33

Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Abraham has now heard what the Judge intends to do.

The next question is what a man who knows the Judge will do with that knowledge.

He will stand before Him and plead.



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