

Journey INTO THE Bible

Supplemental Material

Genesis, Part One: Lesson Six

Genesis 18:1—19:29

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The Impact of Sodom and Gomorrah

The significance of Sodom and Gomorrah is not lost outside the Book of Genesis. For example, in Deuteronomy 29:23 the punishment that God will visit on his people for infidelity is: "...all its soil burned out by sulfur and salt...unable to support any vegetation, like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah..." Israel's enemies are described as stemming from the vine stock of Sodom and the vineyards of Gomorrah (Deuteronomy 32:32). Israel's prophets hold up the sin cities to their audiences as reflections of the evils committed by God's people. Isaiah of Jerusalem announces that his people proclaim their sin like Sodom (3:9). Jeremiah says that his people, in committing adultery and strengthening the hands of evildoers, have become like Sodom and Gomorrah (23:14).

The prophets also compare the destruction of countries and peoples to that visited on the sin cities (see Jeremiah 49:18; 50:40; Zephaniah 2:9). In general, the prophets employ the fate of the sin cities as the classic example of punishment for violation of covenant. The prophet Ezekiel may have received a somewhat different tradition regarding Sodom. In Ezekiel 16, the prophet draws a parallel between Jerusalem and Sodom. Sodom is presented as Jerusalem's younger sister. In 16:49, Sodom is described as proud, sated with food, and utterly complacent. She is conspicuous for not aiding the poor and needy. However, Sodom will be restored: "As for your sisters, Sodom and her daughters shall return to their former state..." (16:55).