

God has proven that he always judges fairly by destroying the wicked but delivering the righteous from his sweeping judgment, therefore rejoice in God’s perfect justice and seek deliverance in the Righteous One who was judged in your place.

Introduction – Today people are beginning to doubt whether the God of the Bible is righteous at all. [Richard Dawkins quote.] Many people have effectively put the God of the Bible on trial as a moral monster, doubting whether God judges fairly.

I. God on Trial

A. Abraham’s Question: does God judge fairly? (Gen 18:23-25)

Abraham steps into God’s courtroom (in v. 23 the verb *nagash* is a legal term meaning to “step forth in litigation”) and tests the fairness of the Judge.

B. God’s Answer: consider my dealings with Sodom (Gen 18:17-21, 26, 32b)

1. God is just: he is not willing to tolerate the sins of the wicked forever (Job 10:14; Josh 24:19).
2. God is merciful: he is willing to spare the wicked for the sake of the righteous (Ex 34:6-7).

II. Sodom on Trial

A. The Charges

1. *Generally* the sins of wickedness and injustice (v. 13; cf. 18:19-21). Elsewhere the sins of Sodom are identified as arrogance, apathy, and merciless treatment of the needy (Ezek 16:49).
2. *Manifestly* the sin of attempted homosexual rape (vv. 4-9). Lest we condemn rape and condone homosexuality, the NT highlights their sin as immoral, unnatural, sensual desire (2 Pet 2:6-9; Jude 7).
3. *Fundamentally* the sin of inhospitality. (vv1-3). This is difficult to see without studying how Genesis 18 &19 are closely related by way of comparison and contrast. Abraham and Lot demonstrated righteousness with the typical hospitality of their culture. The men of Sodom showed gross inhospitality, manifestly in wickedness, injustice, and (in this case) attempted homosexual rape.

B. The Evidence

1. Lot and his family (vv. 1-3, 14; cf 2 Pet 2:7). Lot showed hospitality to the travelers, making himself their “servant” and inviting them home to dine and lodge with his family. He urged them not to stay the night in the town square because Sodom was dangerous at night. As a righteous man living in Sodom, he knew from experience his neighbors were wicked.
2. The men of Sodom (vv. 4-9). Verse 4 is very clear that every single man of Sodom was guilty of violence against Lot and his household. In verse 9 they condemn themselves with their own words. They were prepared to break down doors to satiate their lustful violence.
3. The angels/messengers (vv. 10-13). The angels came to Sodom to investigate the cries against Sodom. But they had to do more than observe Sodom’s behavior; they had to act in mercy to protect the righteous.

4. Abraham and Sarah (18:1-8, 22-33). Their hospitality to strangers shines brighter than that of Lot and contrasts sharply with the violence of Sodom toward the same strangers. Abraham pleaded with God to mercifully spare the wicked in Sodom for the sake of the righteous living there, but the men of Sodom would show no mercy to the righteous.

C. The Verdict

1. Sodom is wicked as charged (vv. 13). God has been patient with Sodom, giving opportunity to repent. Note the harmony of God's justice and mercy; cf. Ezek 33:11; 1 Thess 2:16.
2. Lot is righteous, albeit a buffoon (vv. 7-8, 14, 16a, 18-20, 30-38). Unfortunately, Lot perceives himself to be on the horns of a terrible dilemma—to choose between two wrong actions—protect his guests or protect his daughters. Lot simultaneously passes the test and fails the test! It is now clear that the wickedness of Sodomite culture has worked its way into Lot's thinking. Yet at the same time he has rebuked his neighbors ("brothers") for their wickedness and has set himself morally opposed to them. On this reckoning Lot is righteous.

D. Judgment and Deliverance

1. Narrowly save the righteous (vv. 10-22). Abraham's intercession for God to spare Sodom for the sake of 10 righteous in the city is not enough to stave off Judgment Day. Lot and his small family are barely saved (cf. 1 Pet 4:18). Lot's wife looks back yearning for her life in Sodom and she does not escape, becoming a pillar of salt.
2. Utterly destroy the guilty (vv. 23-29). God literally destroys Sodom and the surrounding cities by raining "fire and brimstone" on them. It was not just the people who fell under judgment. God "overthrew" all the cities, all the valley, all the inhabitants, and all the vegetation! Absolute destruction is the picture—like a nuclear bomb detonated in Sodom's town square!

III. You on Trial

A. Sodom's judgment is a sample (end-of-time intrusion) of the Great Judgment

1. Every instance of terrible judgment (the Flood, Sodom & Gomorrah, the Exodus, the Conquest of Canaan, the Babylonian Exile) is a preview of the Great Judgment (2 Pet 3:10). No one will escape the Great Judgment because no one is righteous before God (Rom 3:9-12, 19-20).
2. Jesus' judgment on the cross as our substitute is the Great Judgment for the "righteous" (those who are righteous by faith). God will avert his judgment of the unrighteous for the sake of not ten righteous, but a single righteous person—Jesus Christ.
3. Jesus' second coming is the Great Judgment for the wicked (Mt 16:27; 2 Thess 1:5-10).

B. The Great Judgment: the Day of the Lord

1. Deliverance for those who trust in the Righteous One for their sake (Luke 17:20-37).
2. Judgment for those who trust in their own righteousness (Luke 18:9-14).

Conclusion – In one sense you are the jury, and you must admit that Sodom's trial proves God is not a moral monster (as many today charge), and that God will judge everyone fairly. But in another sense you are on trial. Are you confident that your own righteousness will require God to deliver you from judgment? Prepare to be disappointed in God's perfect justice. Or is Judgment Day for you a day of bright hope? Take heart, for God is merciful.