

99-01-31b

Let's resume now our study of the life of Abraham. We're in Genesis chapter 18. We're beginning a new chapter.

This next section... Of course, I'm having such a hard time leaving Genesis 17 because I've enjoyed learning so many different things from it. I will mention one other thing just briefly from 17 to submit for your consideration. Isn't it remarkable that this rite of circumcision has two different types of implementation? If you think about this, the 8-day-old son is circumcised and the stranger or foreigner, the slave that is purchased or brought into the household through conquest or whatever means if a daughter for some reason should actually marry outside of Israel and that son-in-law comes in or so forth, then he's circumcised.

But if you reflect on that for a moment, the 8-day-old baby has nothing to say about circumcision. Of course, they're going to wail and holler. That's quite common.

But there's no volition involved for the 8-day-old Israelite boy or for any other child that's born in the household. So that's one type of circumcision. That has been compared, by the way, to what some church denominations practice today as far as infant baptism.

That, well, we understand that the child doesn't have an understanding or an ability to comprehend or to make a decision at this point. This is really a decision and an action taken on the part of the parents. So there's that aspect of the circumcision of the baby boy.

And then in the other separate and distinct case where someone who is older, probably an adult, comes into the household through marriage or as a slave or whatever, joins himself voluntarily to the household of Israel and so forth and decides to remain there and to sojourn with Israel or to become a part of an Israelite household, that male would undergo circumcision. That is his decision, his conscious expression of desire to join himself to the people of God, to enter into the covenanted blessings that are symbolized by that rite. You have these, in other words, sort of Israelites by birth and you have those who are Israelites by choice.

Of course, the sign again of circumcision doesn't mean that this has taken place at a spiritual level, but that's what it symbolizes, that is what it represents. You can see this on a larger scale when you look at Israel as the Old Testament people of God and you look at the church as the New Testament people of God. Similarly, you could be in the household of Israel by birth as the physical seed of Abraham.

We as the church, with that circumcision made without hands, we are people of God by choice. There is no inherited identity because we can trace our ancestry back to some individual. We join ourselves to the body of Christ by choice and we are like those who

came into the household not by rite of birth.

You can see it implied in Genesis 17 that there's not even so much intentionally, but you get the idea that those by birth, that's the way to do it. What a great thing it is to be born into the household of the seed of Abraham. These others may be foreigners or slaves or those who are lesser.

It doesn't talk about princes and nobles and kings coming in and being circumcised. These are ones who kind of get there late, get there out of time, and are circumcised after the fact. They weren't circumcised on the eighth day.

And so they're sort of considered to be lesser. And Israel sort of embodies this pride of place. Well, we are children of Abraham, the Pharisees say to Jesus.

Abraham is our father. Jesus says, you are of your father the devil. And they say, oh no, Abraham is our father.

And the Gentiles are sort of the second generation of the church. The first generation of the church is Jewish. And you have Peter and James and all of the Jews who come to faith in Christ.

And so we see that in some ways we as the church have a greater responsibility because we join ourselves by choice where in Israel the picture is they were Israelites by birth. And of course they are still responsible to make the choice as the circumcised to make that circumcision real. We who join ourselves to Jesus Christ by a conscious decision, we also have the responsibility to make that circumcision made without hands real in our lives.

But it's something to meditate on when you think about these two different kinds. And I think that it also helps us understand why infant baptism is not the New Testament equivalent of circumcision in the old. Because we're not in the age of ritual anymore.

We don't need an equivalent physical ritual in the church. We are those who are strangers and foreigners who at one time were without God and without hope in the world. But now we have been brought near.

We have been made nigh. We have been reconciled to God. We embody that slave who was brought into the household and made on a par, made equal in terms of opportunity to receive the blessings of God.

You could be a lowly Moabite slave brought over into Israel. And when you enter the household of a faithful Israelite and circumcised, you might have brought your whole family. It might have been a man and his whole family has been made a slave by right of conquest.

And he's brought into the household of an Israelite who says, you're a part of my household now and you share my roof and the blessings that God is going to bring my family, in my tribe, in my clan. And you're going to be circumcised. It gives somebody who was an outsider the opportunity to be an insider, to share in the blessings that God is channeling through Israel.

That's where we are. And so I think that understanding helps us. This issue comes up.

Some people say, well, we have a dedication service for our baby child. We bring him up in front of the congregation and the elders lay hands on him and so forth. I'm not throwing rocks at that per se, but I think our understanding ought to be educated as we look at this passage on circumcision.

To remind us of where we stand in God's plan and where the important things really are. That type of ritual was a part of the old age. We see ourselves now as those who were strangers and aliens that have been brought near by choice.

We chose like Ruth to come and join ourselves to the people of God. It wasn't a right of birth like it was for most of the Israelites. So you look at Uriah the Hittite.

I have no doubt that when he came and joined himself to David and joined the nation of Israel and married an Israelite woman, he got himself circumcised. He was a Hittite. But he joined himself by choice to Israel.

And he's listed in the roster of the heroes. And his life and his death serves a unique place and a unique purpose in God's plan. Even though he was murdered, Uriah is notable.

His faith and his obedience. Remember when David tried to get him in to take advantage of his presence back in the capital city there and to go in and spend time with his wife when the armies of Israel. And his nobility is contrasted with the lack of integrity and lack of nobility of David.

He's a Hittite. He chose to come and become a part of Israel. And look at the place that he has in God's plan and in God's word.

What a wonderful thing. His life reflects the glory of God. His life serves an important purpose in God's plan and in God's word.

Our lives will do the same thing in the ages to come. If we make that choice real in our daily lives. If we pursue that circumcision made without hands.

So I wanted to mention that as we leave Genesis 17. The contrast between those who were circumcised at birth and those who are circumcised as adults when they come and join themselves to Israel or are joined. And there's a lot you can think about there.

What about the slave who the master said, Well, you have no choice. You're coming into my household. You're going to be circumcised.

There are principles of blessing by association. There are principles of opportunity that people have. Even though they receive the sign.

Even though they're brought into the household. They may or may not avail themselves of that opportunity. You can compare this.

This actually was suggested in the program I mentioned last night about these. I almost hate to even bring up the subject. But homosexual, transvestite, drag queen guys.

Some of these people have actually given themselves sex change operations. And then they subsequently come to faith in Christ and come into the church and get back to wearing men's clothes and trying to live a man's life. But now they are a eunuch.

And then they go to those passages in the word of God that cover that status. There are some who are eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom. If you find yourself to be a eunuch, make sure that you're a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom.

Take advantage of that status. Look at those passages. God talks about it in the Old Testament and in the New.

Anything can work together for good. God will work it together for good to those who love him. To those who are the called according to his purpose.

If we are the called according to his purpose, A, we have to know what his purpose is. B, we have to know what our calling is. How our life fits into that purpose.

That's what the mark of circumcision was supposed to remind Israel of. That's the opportunity that was given to the stranger and the foreigner and the slave who was brought into Israel by choice or by circumstance, whatever it is. Many foreigners and many aliens say, Well, if Israel only was the people of God, only the believers were in Israel and weren't believers elsewhere, what about all these poor Hittites and Amorites and so forth? Well, a lot of them, if they had any glimmer of positive choice toward God, God had a means of bringing them into Israel.

They could be circumcised. They could enter into the life and the opportunities of Israel, even as a foreigner, just like Uriah did. So, we're now ready for Genesis chapter 18.

Our goal this morning, in this lesson, is to familiarize ourselves with the details of this story. If we closed our Bibles right now and had a little closed book quiz, you could give me the broad outline of what happens here. We know that Sodom and Gomorrah are exceedingly wicked.

God says he's going to destroy them. We remember the fire and the brimstone. We know

that there were all kinds of perverse people there, lots of homosexuals and so on.

And we know that Abraham's nephew Lot is delivered out of that in the process. There are some angelic visitations and things going on. After that, we start getting a little fuzzy on the details.

We want to observe carefully the details in these next two chapters of this story because they sometimes say, well, the devil is in the details. Actually, the great truths are in the details of this story. Genesis 18, 1, Then the Lord appeared to him, this is Abraham, by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.

Every single one of those details is important and we'll return and analyze them. But how many of us remember that Abraham was sitting in the door? See, I'm going to have trouble now between Abram and Abraham since he just now changed his name. Abraham is sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.

It's not morning, it's not evening, it's the heat of the day. So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him. And when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the ground and said, My Lord, if I have now found favor in your sight, do not pass on by your servant.

Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will bring a morsel of bread that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by inasmuch as you have come to your servant.

They said, Do as you have said. So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal. Knead it and make cakes.

And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree as they ate.

Then they said to him, Where is Sarah your wife? So he said, Here in the tent. And he said, I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son. Now Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.

Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age, and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also? And the Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I surely bear a child since I am old? You have to remember the details. Where is Sarah? Where is Abraham? Why does God ask Abraham this question? She's inside the tent.

She laughs within herself. But God asks Abraham why she's laughing. Verse 14, Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time, I will return to you according to

the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

But Sarah denied it, saying, I did not laugh, for she was afraid. And he said, No, you did laugh. That's the end of scene one in these two chapters.

Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 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, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has spoken to him. Here's another verse, I can't restrain myself from pointing out, that tells me that the Abrahamic covenant is conditional.

What does God himself say in verse 19? 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, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has spoken to him. Walk before my face in integrity. Walk before me and be blameless.

Verse 20, The Lord said, Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to me. This is God speaking. Saying, I've got to go down and check out the report that has been brought to me.

And if not, I will know. God says, I'm going to go find out whether this outcry that has been brought to my presence is accurate or not. I'm going to go down and see for myself whether it is so or not.

Verse 22, Then the men turned away from there and went towards Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord. This is a translation we're going to have to correct in verse 22. That is not what the Hebrew says.

It's a very ancient change made there in verse 22. I will tell you now. No, I'll tell you later.

Verse 23, And Abraham came near and said, Would you also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city. Would you also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked. Far be it from you.

Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? So the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sake. Then Abraham answered and said, Indeed now I, who am but dust and ashes, have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous.

Would you destroy all of the city for the lack of five? So he said, If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy it. And he spoke to him yet again and said, Suppose there should be forty found there. So he said, I will not do it for the sake of forty.

Then he said, Let not the Lord be angry and I will speak. Suppose thirty should be found there. So he said, I will not do it if I find thirty there.

And he said, Indeed now I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty should be found there. So he said, I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty.

Then he said, Let not the Lord be angry and I will speak but once more. Suppose ten should be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for the sake of ten.

So the Lord went his way as soon as he had finished speaking with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place. So that's the end of the second scene there. Chapter 19.

I have said these two chapters need to be considered together because this is one episode. Now the two angels, they're called angels here, but these are the two men that departed. Remember there were three men that came and visited Abraham, had the meal under the tree.

The two men went on their way and the Lord remained there with Abraham. And then they had this little dialogue we just read. Well, what happened to the two that departed? Well, now we get what happened with them.

Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. That means something. Where was Abraham at the beginning of chapter 18? Sitting in the door of the tent.

Where is Lot? Sitting in the gate of the city. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. You can already begin to tell that we have some parallelism here, don't we? If you keep your finger back in 18 and look at what happens with Abraham when he sees the visitors, what Lot does when he sees the visitors, you're going to see some similarities.

We have similarities of language, we have similarities of action, we have similarities of structure in these two parts of the story. He saw them, he rose to meet them, he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. And he said, Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servants' house and spend the night and wash your feet.

You know, we have all this controversy about foot washing in the church and Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Well, here's where you get the first mentions of foot washing in the whole Bible here in 18 and 19. Spend the night, wash your feet, that you may rise early and go on your way.

And they said, No, but we will spend the night in the open square. But he insisted strongly. So they turned in to him and entered his house.

Then he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter surrounded the house. And they called a lot and said to him, Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them.

It says carnally in italics there, but that tells you the Hebrew for that is lacking. Bring them out to us, that we may know them. So a lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, and said, Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly.

See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man. Please let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish. Only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof.

And they said, Stand back. Then they said, This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge. Now we will deal worse with you than with them.

So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door. But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them and shut the door. These are the two angels.

They reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them and shut the door. And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door. These guys have been blinded by angels, and they are still trying to find the door.

Then the men said to Lot, Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in this city, take them out of this place. For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it. So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, Get up, get out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city.

But to his sons-in-law, he seemed to be joking. By the way, that word translated joking is Yitzchak, Isaac, same word used when Sarah laughs. It's in the PL, it's in the intensive stem, but it's the same verb.

Verse 15, When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, Arise, take your wife and your two daughters lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city. And while he lingered, you just can't help but notice, two angels have come from God, they've stayed in your house, they've blinded people outside your door, they've rescued you from a horrible fate at the hands of these sodomites. They say, Get your wife and your two daughters who are here, and get out of here.

God's going to destroy the city. Don't be consumed in their punishment. What does Lot do in verse 16? He lingers.

While he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. I've seen some recreations of Lot and his family fleeing. They never show the two angels dragging them out by the hands to get them out of the city.

The son-in-laws flat refused to go. They laugh and think it's a big joke. These angels talked a lot, and he doesn't want to leave.

And so the two angels have to forcibly drag him, his wife, and his two daughters outside the city so that they can destroy it. And that's the Lord's mercy. Verse 17, So it came to pass when they had brought them outside that he said, Escape for your life.

Do not look behind you, nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed. Then Lot said to them, Please, no, my lords.

Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life, but I cannot escape to the mountains. Some evil will overtake me, and I will die. See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one.

Please let me escape there. Is it not a little one? And my soul shall live. And he said to him, See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken, this little town.

Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar.

Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah from the Lord out of the heavens. So he overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord. And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the plain. And he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace.

We've seen the smoke of a furnace just in our recent study. Remember the pieces of the animal? The smoking furnace and the burning torch passed between the pieces. The smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.

And it came to pass when God destroyed the cities of the plain that God remembered

Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt. Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains. And his two daughters were with him, for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar.

Now wait a minute. Why was it he didn't go to the mountains in the first place? Verse 20, this little city, I want to go there. Let me escape there and my soul shall live.

Because in verse 19, if I escape to the mountains, some evil will overtake me and I will die. He was afraid to go to the mountains, so he went to Zoar. Now he's in Zoar and he's afraid to stay there, so he's going to go to the mountains.

He was afraid to dwell in Zoar. He and his two daughters dwelt in a cave. Now the firstborn said to the younger, Our father is old, and there is no man on the earth to come into us as is the custom of all the earth.

Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him that we may preserve the lineage of our father. So they made their father drink wine that night, and the firstborn went in and lay with her father. And he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, Indeed, I lay with my father last night. Let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in and lie with him that we may preserve the lineage of our father. So they made their father drink wine that night also, and the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day.

And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ami. He is the father of all the people of Ammon to this day. Of course, Am in Hebrew is... Well, we'll get into this when we come back to the end.

Suffice it to say, this pretty much completes that story from beginning to end, these two chapters. The similarities between things that we have already covered in Genesis and parallels and contrasts are numerous. I will just give you a few things to think about before we delve into the details next time.

We have already seen, and I think you've probably picked up the similarity between God and the two angels. They are called three men who visit Abraham in chapter 18 while he's sitting in the door of his tent and they come out. He comes out and says certain things.

Lot says very similar things when those men come to Sodom. And in each case, they partake of a meal. In each case, they spend some time.

In each case, they deliver a divine message. And the stories begin to diverge when the night falls in Sodom and the men dwell there. You have the messengers from God with Lot.

You have God alone speaking to Abram. And you have the statements made by Lot. We find out a lot about Lot.

He's been with Abraham since the beginning. He journeyed with Abram way back. And when they went down to Egypt and when they came back up, he was there.

He saw these things. He participated. We saw the dividing of the flocks and the settling in different places.

But we really get some insight into the nature of Lot here. When he recognizes the messengers, he brings them in and shelters them under his roof. He protects them.

He says, Oh my goodness, you can't stay out in the city square. I know what kind of people I'm dwelling among here. It would be exceedingly dangerous for you.

Come inside my roof. Then he goes out and makes this offer of his daughters to these men. What is that all about? I don't want you to touch these men that I just met today, but you can have my daughters that I've raised from birth.

Let me bring them out. You can have your way with them. Do unto them as you please.

Then when they deliver the message from God of warning and of deliverance, get out of the city, he lingers and he doesn't want to go. He has to be dragged out. And he is fearful.

He doesn't want to obey the Lord even as in the act of deliverance. He doesn't want to go to the mountains to which he is commanded to flee. And he says, I want to go to this little town of Zoar.

The town of Zoar was marked for destruction, wasn't it? The reason Zoar does not get destroyed is because Lot is there. But Lot only stays there a short time. And then he becomes afraid in Zoar because this is the same kind of people that he was dwelling amongst down in Sodom.

And so he flees the town of Zoar and goes on up to the mountains. And so this town that should have been destroyed by God and its complement of wicked individuals is spared just because of this brief sojourn of Lot. And Lot goes on up into the hills.

But when you read the story of destruction, when God rains down fire and brimstone, if you haven't already picked this up, think back to Genesis 9. Think back to the story of the flood where you had the last great judgment by God on a group of individuals. And we saw the covenant. God said, I'm never again going to destroy the earth by a flood.

It's going to be in your hands to administer justice and to cut off the murderer from the earth and so forth. But here we have a mass judgment by God. And look at the language.

Last time, God delivered certain individuals and got them out of the way before He executed judgment. The last time there was a judgment, where did it come from? What was it composed of? It rained from heaven and there was fire and brimstone. The great fountains of the deep were broken up and there was fire and brimstone along with it.

A lot of people forget that, but that was a part of the flood judgment was a lot of volcanic activity. Fire and brimstone. Here you have fire and brimstone again and it rains from heaven.

It doesn't rain water, but it rains destruction down on these cities. God, instead of raining water, rains fire and brimstone down out of the heavens. You remember in the midst of the flood when we were reading... Turn back with me just for a second to that passage where in the midst of the flood judgment in chapter 8, verse 1, you remember after all the living things were destroyed on the face of the ground, the waters prevailed 150 days at the end of Genesis chapter 7. And then in chapter 8, verse 1, what does it say? Then God remembered Noah and those who were with him in the ark.

What does it say in Genesis chapter 19, verse 29? It came to pass when God destroyed the cities of the plain that God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt. What happens after you have the stating of the covenant and the rainbow and so forth in the story of Noah? You remember over in chapter 9, verse 20, Noah began to be a farmer and he planted a vineyard, drank of the wine, was drunk in his tent. There was an incestuous thing that happened and a curse that results.

Remember that? Well, now Lot goes up and lives in the cave with his daughters and what happens? Lot gets drunk, an incestuous thing happens and a curse is going to result. The Moabites and the Ammonites were a thorn in the side of Israel throughout their history. So there are parallels, there are things that hark back to what we have studied in the past in this episode.

One of the most fascinating things, and the first thing we're going to study in depth here is right at the beginning of chapter 19 where it says that three men appear to Abraham and yet one of these individuals appears to be the Lord God. Well, how is that possible? Is this in fact, no man has seen God and lived and if this is God, what sort of a manifestation of God is this? Is this a divinely appointed messenger speaking for God? Is this in fact a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ? This has often been classified as a Christophany, one of the Old Testament appearances of Jesus Christ. What is the meaning of this physical manifestation of the Lord God who sits and eats with Abraham and speaks to him? What exactly is going on here? Why don't we just have another voice out of heaven communicating these things? Why is there a physical

appearance? Why is it necessary for God to come down and see for himself if the reports that he has received, we're so steeped in the knowledge that God is omniscient and knows all and sees all.

Why would God need to come down in bodily form and make this little excursion to go down and look out at the city and see for himself whether these things are so or not? There are many questions for us to answer here and as we do we're going to discover I think some very interesting and some very helpful things from this story. What is the nature of the deliverance of Lot? We've seen that there is some comparison to the deliverance of Noah and his family through the flood. Abraham is not at issue here.

It's not like Abraham has to be encapsulated or removed out of the judgment. It's Lot, someone who's just associated with Abraham. We see a contrast.

We've been invited to see a comparison between these two by the language. God remembered Noah. God remembered Abraham.

You have the similarity of mercy before judgment and of the message of deliverance and the opportunity to flee and those who reject it. And so we're invited to compare these and yet there are also some very significant contrasts. It's not the man who is declared to be righteous and blameless in his generation that is delivered.

It is someone associated with him. This man does not seem worthy of the deliverance. You look at the things he says, the offer he makes of his daughter, his fear, his weakness in fathering by incest these two sons who are going to turn out to be lions of people.

What exactly are we to make of all of this? This is where we're going in the course of our study of the next two chapters. We obviously aren't going to be able to answer all of those questions this morning. What we do see, though, is that God is actively involved.

God has made this covenant with Abraham and you might think, well, now God's going to disappear off the scene and it's up to Abraham to walk before God and be blameless. But we see one thing that strikes you if you look at this broad outline of what we're seeing in the next two chapters. God is actively involved in the life of Abraham after the covenant, after the seal, after the circumcision, isn't he? This is the first time that God has appeared in bodily form and walked around talking to Abraham.

This is after that seal, after Abraham's obedience and his manifested desire to fulfill the terms of this covenant. Abraham enters a new phase of relationship with God and there's a new level of activity, God's involvement in the life of Abraham. He's appeared sporadically.

Fifteen years go by between one appearance and the next. Now we see God actively appearing and we see this great judgment. Why does God pick this particular time to judge Sodom and Gomorrah? Why not twenty years earlier? Why not before Abraham

came into the land? Why not sometime later in the life of Isaac or Jacob? All of these things work together to paint a picture for us of where we stand as we pursue the circumcision made without hands and the calling and the opportunity for the fulfillment of promise in our lives.

Are we sort of left to our own devices? Well, you've got your Bible there, go for it. Or is there an active participation, an active presence of God in our lives as there is in the life of Abraham? This is what we're going to see. This is what we're going to document from the Word of God in our upcoming few lessons as we study these next two chapters.

So it's an exciting thing. It has great truth and great relevance, if I can use that word, for us as we mine the truth out of the details of this story. So I offer you that as an advertisement for things to come as we close our study this morning in the Word of God.

Let's close here in the Word of Prayer. Father, we thank you for the truth of your Word. We thank you that this is the means by which our souls are nourished, that our character is transformed, that we are fully equipped for every good work.

We thank you for the challenges that we face in our lives, the things that create resistance because we know that it is in those circumstances that the truth of your Word moves from the page and from our intellect into our hearts and into the realm of application and into the realm of experience. We pray that our time and our fellowship in your Word this morning will accomplish those things for us as we face the challenges of the coming days. We pray that we will be alert and sensitive for the opportunities that you bring to us in each day to apply these things to manifest your power as you did when you delivered the Israelites across the Jordan.

We pray that our deliverance and your strength and your power in our lives will communicate both to us and to others the truth of the Gospel, the truth of your presence and the truth of your plan and all of the things that are held forth as promise and as our hope. We pray that in all things our lives will reflect the glory of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his name.

Amen.