

## PART THIRTY-TWO

### THE STORY OF ABRAHAM: LOT'S LAST DAYS

Genesis 19:1-38

#### 1. *Lot's Hospitality* (vv. 1-3)

1 *And the two angels came to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot saw them, and rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face to the earth; 2 and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn aside, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your way. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. 3 And he urged them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.*

While Abraham had been pleading with God, the other two heavenly Visitants had entered the doomed city. Note, *the two angels came*. Speiser (ABG, 138): "This identification is meant for the reader, who knows that Yahweh stayed behind with Abraham (18:22) in order to tell him of the melancholy mission. The author was equally direct in introducing the other visit (18:1). But Lot must discover the truth for himself, as Abraham did earlier." It was in the light of the miracle (v. 11) that the "men" (vv. 5, 8, 10; cf. 18:22) were now clearly revealed as angels. *It is at this point that the text becomes more specific.* "By thus viewing the action through the eyes of the actors, the spectator also is caught up in the unfolding drama, in spite of his advance knowledge." Note that the angels arrived at Sodom "at even," that is, *in the evening*. Now the southern tip of what is now the Dead Sea is some forty miles from Hebron. Normal traveling time for that distance in the patriarchal age

would have been about two days; supposing these visitors had left their sumptuous meal at Abraham's tent toward mid-afternoon, they must have had superhuman powers to have made the journey in such a short time. Note the following suggestions, from Jewish sources (SC, 93), in which they are treated as angels: "It would surely not have taken them so long to go from Hebron to Sodom; but they were merciful angels, and they waited until Abraham finished his pleading, in the hope they would not have to destroy the place. . . . Similarly, they came there immediately after they left Abraham, but did not enter the city until even, hoping that Abraham's prayers would be efficacious." (The first of these suggestions is from the medieval commentator Rashi (d. 1105), the second from Sforino, who died at Bologna in 1550). (We must remember that angels are represented in Scripture as having superhuman knowledge, but not omniscience).

"*Lot sat in the gate of Sodom.*" The "gate" was the usual resort of all, and especially of the elders, of whatever city. There legal issues were adjudicated, transactions completed, bargains made, everyday affairs discussed. The gate was "the focal point of all communal activities in an urban center like Sodom." Lot arose to meet his visitors, and bowed himself "with his face to the earth" (the manner in which courtiers and clients address their superiors in the Amarna letters; in the corresponding case of Abraham (18:2), the term for "face" is significantly missing, ABG, 138).

*Lot's hospitality* was, in the main, according to the usual ritual, but *with significant overtones*. (1) He urged them to "turn aside," etc. Having gone out to meet them, he invited them to come to his house (in contrast to Abraham's tent, 18:1, 6, 9, 10), suggesting that they *turn aside* to get there, that is, take a roundabout way. At the same time he invited them to "tarry all night" at his house, adding, "and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early,

and go on your way." Customarily, this order would have been reversed, that is, the washing of feet should have been the first act of the ritual. But, according to Rashi, "Lot feared that if they washed their feet first, and would then be discovered, the Sodomites would accuse him of having harboured them already for a few days. He therefore asked them to spend the night there without washing their feet, to make it appear that they had only just arrived" (SC, 93). When the celestial visitors modestly declined Lot's invitation, stating their preference to "abide in the street all night" (for the purpose, it seems, of evaluating realistically the abhorrent vices of the Sodomites), Lot is said to have "urged them greatly": evidently he pressured them as courteously as possible not to do this, because he knew well the lust and violence to which they would be subjected (undoubtedly a point in his favor). (To pass the night in the street was not an unusual thing. The climate permitted such a course; wrapped in their cloaks, travelers frequently spent the night sleeping in the street, especially "in the broad place," the enlarged area just within the city gate which served as the market place and the concourse for all types of people). In response to Lot's urgency the angels "turned in unto him, and entered into his house": that is, *they took a circuitous path* to get there. Safely within the house, Lot proceeded with true, Oriental hospitality to bake unleavened bread and make a feast, "and they did eat." The same excellent courtesy which we have noted in Abraham still characterizes the nephew.

We may well ask, *Why was Lot in the gate of Sodom in the first place?* Whitelaw (PCG, 252): "In what capacity Lot was sitting in the gate is not narrated. That he was on the outlook for travelers on whom to practice the hospitality he had learned from his uncle (Poole, Willet, Calvin, Lange) is perhaps to form too high an ideal of his piety (Kalisch); while the explanation that he had been

promoted to the dignity of one of the city judges, though not perhaps justified as an inference from v. 9, is not at all unlikely, considering his relationship to Abraham." Jamieson (CECG, 160), concerning the "gate": "In eastern cities it is the market, and is often devoted to other business transactions (Ruth, ch. 4), the administration of justice, and the enjoyment of social intercourse and amusement; especially it is a favorite lounge in the evenings, the arched roof affording a pleasant shade." Or, *was Lot's presence at the gate of Sodom a further proof of his moral and spiritual degeneracy?* As Leupold puts it (EG, 555-556): "Lot's presence here will hardly be accounted for on the assumption that he was on the lookout for guests in order to afford his hospitality an opportunity to welcome chance strangers. Strangers cannot have been so common in those days. Rather, Lot's presence in the gate constitutes a reproach to the otherwise good and 'righteous' man (2 Pet. 2:8). After having first moved into the Plain of Sodom (13:11), he presently chose Sodom itself as his dwelling place (13:12); and now finally he has arrived at the point where the activities, the bustle and stir, are looked upon with a more or less tolerant interest. This much cannot be denied in the reference to Lot, that when the approach of the strangers is noticed by him, he promptly advances to them with a gracious invitation. He is not ignorant of the danger that threatens chance visitors in such a town. He arises to meet them and bows with the customary respectful oriental salutation. . . . With anxiety for their welfare—for he knows what men in the open must face—and, perhaps, consciously at no small risk to himself, he makes his invitation as attractive as possible." (It should be recalled here that, according to Scripture, God does not look with favor on the concentration of population. His command was, at the first, "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it," Gen. 1:28. "Replenish" here means "to

stock" the whole earth with progeny. But the rebellious race took the opposite course: they concentrated on a plain in Shinar and presumed to build a city and a tower—a tower whose top would reach "unto heaven"—making it necessary for God to confound their speech and thus scatter them abroad: Gen. 11:1-9. Concentration of population invariably breeds vice, crime, violence, and strife of every kind.)

## 2. *The Violence of the Sodomites* (vv. 4-11)

4 *But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; 5 and they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men that came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. 6 And Lot went out unto them to the door, and shut the door after him. 7 And he said; I pray you, my brethren, do not so wickedly. 8 Behold now, I have two daughters that have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing, forasmuch as they are come under the shadow of my roof. 9 And they said, Stand back. And they said, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and drew near to break the door. 10 But the men put forth their hand, and brought Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. 11 And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves to find the door.*

Before Lot and the members of his household and his celestial visitors "lay down," that is, could retire for the night, the men of Sodom surrounded the house, "both young and old," all of them "from every quarter," i.e.,

"from one end of the city to the other, there not being even one righteous man to protest" (SC, 94). The mob cried out to Lot to bring his visitors out to them "that we may know them." *i.e.*, "vent our lust upon them" (Rashi, *et al*). This demand was, of course, "the basest violation of the sacred rite of hospitality, and the most shameless proclamation of their sin" (COTP, 233). (The verb "know," as used here, is used in the same sense as in Judg. 19:22-26, namely, as having reference to such perversions of the sex function as homosexuality (including Lesbianism), pederasty, bestiality, etc., practices everywhere prevalent among the Canaanites (Lev. 18:3, 18:22-23, 20:13, 15), and according to the Apostle Paul, Rom. 1:24-27, the curse of heathenism generally. It will be recalled that the Cult of Fertility, worship of the Sun-father and the Earth-Mother, which characterized the entire ancient pagan world, featured ritual prostitution, phallic worship, etc., and sanctioned all forms of individual sex perversion as well). It was at this point that Lot committed the egregious error of offering as a substitute his two virgin daughters to be used as the attackers might want to use them to satisfy their unnatural lust. But the immediate response was even more threatening. This fellow (Lot), they cried out, who is only a sojourner in our city, has been trying to play the role of a judge all this while (undoubtedly this means that he had been wont to reprove the people for their iniquitous ways), so now let us be rid of him. In exasperation they threaten to deal with him severely, that is, not just to abuse him sexually as they sought to abuse his guests, but actually to kill him. To the heavenly visitors all this was the final proof that Sodom was fit only for destruction; and so they pulled Lot back into the house, closed the door, and smote the men outside with blindness. "What is involved here is not the common affliction, not just 'total blindness,' but a sudden stroke . . . a blinding flash emanating from angels

—who thereby abandon their human disguise—which would induce immediate, if temporary, loss of sight, much like the desert or snow blindness” (ABG, 39). Thus, as has often been the case, human violence was frustrated by divine intervention.

### 3. *Lot's Degeneracy*

This has already been pointed out (1) as beginning in his move to the Plain of Sodom (13:11) being motivated by the prospect of material prosperity and ease, (2) as continuing in his choice of the city itself as a dwelling-place, and thus (at least tacitly) accepting the activities of his urban environment “with a more or less tolerant interest,” (3) is now accentuated by his willingness to allow his two virgin daughters to be victims in a sexual orgy by the lustful male Sodomites (19:8). About all that can be said in his favor is that he did adhere closely to the prescribed cult of hospitality and did try in his own weak way to protect his guests from the unnatural vice with which the Sodomites threatened them. But—did fidelity to the law of hospitality justify his willingness to make scapegoats of his daughters? For example, note this comment: “At that period the honour of a woman was of less account, 12:10f. than the sacred duty of hospitality” (JB, 35). Cf. Skinner (ICCG, 307): “The unnatural vice which derives its name from the incident was viewed in Israel as the lowest depth of moral corruption (cf. Lev. 18:22ff; 20:13, 23; Ezek. 16:50, Judg. 19:22). Lot's readiness to sacrifice the honor of his daughters, though abhorrent to Hebrew morality (cf. Judg. 19:25, 30), shows him a courageous champion of the obligations of hospitality in a situation of extreme embarrassment, and is recorded to his credit.” The over-all consensus is, however, that Lot's action in the offer to sacrifice his daughters on the altar of human male lust was, whatever mitigating circumstances might be offered in his defense, morally *without excuse*. Thus Delitzsch (COPT, 233): “In his

anxiety, Lot was willing to sacrifice to the sanctity of hospitality his duty as a father, which ought to have been still more sacred, and committed the sin of seeking to avert sin by sin. Even if he expected that his daughters would suffer no harm, as they were betrothed to Sodomites (v. 14), the offer was a grievous violation of his paternal duty." "While the narrative reveals Lot's hospitality, it also reveals his wickedness" (SC, 94). Murphy (MG, 322): "How familiar Lot had become with vice, when any necessity whatever could induce him to offer his daughters to the lust of these Sodomites! We may suppose it was spoken rashly, in the heat of the moment, and with the expectation that he would not be taken at his word. So it turned out." (This fact surely points up the infamy of the men of Sodom: they would not be satisfied with what females could offer; they had to have males to serve their purposes.) Leupold (EG, 559-560): "The kindest interpretation of Lot's willingness to sacrifice his daughters to the depraved lusts of these evildoers stresses that it was done with the intent of guarding his guests. To that certainly must be added the fact that under the circumstances Lot was laboring under a certain confusion. But Delitzsch's summary still covers the truth, when he describes Lot's mistakes as being *an attempt to avoid sin by sin*. In days of old, when an exaggerated emphasis on hospitality prevailed, we might have understood how such a sacrifice could be made by a father. But in our day we cannot but feel the strongest aversion to so unpaternal an attitude. Luther's attempts to vindicate Lot's character are quite unconvincing: for Lot could hardly have anticipated with a certain shrewdness that the Sodomites were so bent on this particular form of vileness as to refuse any substitutes. *In fact, their refusal to accept Lot's substitute argues for an intensity of evil purpose that surpasses all comprehension.*" Jamieson (CECG, 160): "The offer made by Lot was so extreme as plainly shows that

he had been thrown into a state of the most perturbed and agitated feeling, between fear of the popular violence and solicitude for the safety of the strangers that were under his roof." The incident (IB, 626-627) "is recorded to Lot's credit as one who was concerned at all costs to fulfill the sacred obligation of a host to protect his guests. At the same time, such treatment of the daughters would have been abhorrent to Hebrew morality." Again, (*ibid*): "Compared with the general population of Sodom Lot was a decent person. The writer of Second Peter (2:6-8) could even think of him as 'just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.' The moments came when, as in the vile events described in this chapter, he was more than vexed. He tried to resist the extreme outrage which the lustful gang in Sodom were about to perpetrate upon the men who had harborage in his house. He would go to great length to fulfill the obligation of hospitality—an obligation which in his world and time was one of the supreme laws of honor. But he had got himself into a place where there could be no decent way out of the crisis that had caught him. All he could think of was the desperate and shameful alternative of sacrificing his own daughters. Even this would not avail. The gang that assaulted his house wanted the men who were his guests there—wanted them for sodomy, the vileness to which the city of Sodom gave its name. In the day when Lot made what he thought was his smart decision to select the neighborhood of Sodom, in the choice Abraham offered him, he did not foresee that the place would prove so evil. But because he did not care enough to consider that, he took the chance and reaped the consequences. Like many another man since, he learned that early choices which seem clever when they smother conscience must pay their heavy reckoning: *There is no guarantee of limited ability for a wrong act.*"—(italics mine-C.C.)

There are three summarizations of Lot's acts and their motivations which are worthy of being presented here to bring to a close this phase of our subject. The first is by Whitelaw (PCG, 253): "The usual apologies—that in sacrificing his daughters to the Sodomites instead of giving up his guests to their unnatural lust, Lot (1) selected the lesser of two sins (Ambrose); (2) thereby protected his guests and discharged the duties of hospitality incumbent on him (Chrysostom); (3) believed his daughters would not be desired by the Sodomites, either because of their well-known betrothal (Rosenmuller), or because of the unnatural lust of the Sodomites (Lange); (4) acted 'rough mental perturbation' (Augustine)—are insufficient to excuse the wickedness of one who in attempting to prevent one sin was himself guilty of another (Delitzsch), who in seeking to be a faithful friend forgot to be an affectionate father (Kalisch), and who, though bound to defend his guests at the risk of his own life, was not at liberty to purchase their safety by the sacrifice of his daughters ('Speaker's Commentary')."

A second excellent summarization is that of Speiser (ABG, 143): "Lot is dutiful in his hospitality. His manner with the visitors, however, appears servile ('with his face to the ground,' vs. 1), as contrasted with the simple dignity of Abraham (18:2), and both his invitation and subsequent preparations lack his uncle's spontaneity. But true to the unwritten code, Lot will stop at nothing in order to protect his guests. Presently, the identity of the visitors is revealed in a flash of supernatural light (v. 11). The angels' intercession serves to bring out the latent weaknesses in Lot's character. He is undecided, flustered, ineffectual. His own sons-in-law refuse to take him seriously (14). He hesitates to turn his back on his possessions, and has to be led to safety by the hand (16), like a child—an ironic sidelight on a man who a moment earlier tried to protect his celestial guests (von Rad).

Lot's irresoluteness makes him incoherent (20). Small wonder that his deliverance is finally achieved without a moment to spare. Had the sun risen an instant sooner, Lot might have shared the fate of his wife; for God's mysterious workings must not be looked at by man." In addition to all this, Lot's degeneracy is further underscored, in his declining years, by intoxication and incest (vv. 30-38). Though neither of these were of his own making, they surely do point up his failure as a father, by proving that he allowed his offspring to suffer the contaminations of the environment in which he had placed them by his own choice and had allowed them to grow up, to become promised to men of Sodom, and so to become infected by the moral rot with which the Cities of the Plain fairly stank. It is significant—is it not?—that after this last-recorded disgraceful incident, the name of Lot disappears completely from sacred history, not even his death being recorded. "Here is an eternal picture of the corrosive possibilities of a bad environment. Those who accustom themselves to the ways of an evil society may themselves at last be evil. What is happening now to people who make no effective protest against the wrongs they live with every day?" (IBG, 624). As Alexander Pope has put it so succinctly:

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,  
As to be hated needs but to be seen;  
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

A final summation here is of special interest, even though it takes the form of a contrast: "Lot and Abraham both were righteous men (15:6, 2 Pet. 2:7, 9), and both enjoyed similar backgrounds and advantages. Abraham, however, looked forward to the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10). Lot, on the contrary, looked toward the city without

heavenly foundations, choosing for the present time without concern for eternity (13:5-18). Lot's misfortune should be a warning for all" (HSB, 31).

#### 4. *The Iniquity of Sodom and Gomorrah*

The iniquity of the Cities of the Plain included certain corollary practices, such as (1) lack of social justice (Isa. 1:9-17), (2) reveling in the indulgence of all kinds of vice openly (Isa. 3:4-12: note tendency in our day to assume that there is a certain virtue in "unblushing openness" in the practice of vice—a sophisticated kind of hypocrisy; (3) priestly (ecclesiastical) heresy and moral corruption (Jer. 23:14-15); complete disregard of the poor, in an affluent society: poverty in the midst of plenty (Ezek. 16:49); preoccupation with things of the secular world (Luke 17:26-32); obsession with sex (Jude 7: note the phrase, "gone after strange flesh," that is, a departure from the order of nature in the corruptions practised). (In our day the ancient Cult of Fertility has been superseded by the by-products of libidinal psychology).

It was the city's *sexual depravity*, however, that provided the basic reason for its utter destruction. On this fact the consensus is practically universal. E.g., "The sin of Sodom was unnatural vice" (IB, 627), as is evident from the fact that Lot knew all too well what remaining in the street all night would have meant to his visitors. "The unnatural vice that takes its name from this incident was an abomination to the Israelites, Lev. 18:22, and was punished with death, Lev. 20:13; but it was rife among their neighbors, Lev. 20:23; cf. Judg. 19:22ff" (JB, 35). The unnatural vice alluded to here was, undoubtedly *homosexuality*, in all likelihood accompanied by all forms of sex perversion. (It should be noted that *bestiality* is also specifically mentioned in the Scripture references: cf. Lev. 18:22, 23; 20:13-16.) *Lesbianism* (female homosexuality) was probably common also; the name derives from the

island of Lesbos where Sappho the Greek poetess, maintained the first "finishing school" in history for young women, which achieved the reputation of having been a disseminator of this vice among the women of Lesbos and the surrounding Greek states.)

Young men and women of our time need to be warned against these unnatural practices. In this category belong the *solitary sex acts* (voluntary in origin and involving sex satisfaction through some method of erotic stimulation of the sex organs). These are *unnatural* in that they involve the abuse of the sex function; they are *harmful* in that they tend to become habitual and hence gradually to weaken the will. In this category we put the following: *masturbation*, commonly called "self-abuse," sometimes erroneously called *onanism* (cf. Gen. 38:8-10). (Onan's act was an offense against the theocratic family, not an act indulged for erotic pleasure). The act, however, if it becomes habitual with young boys, certainly tends to vitiate the will; if persistently practised, undoubtedly it contributes to impotence in later life. *Bestiality*, coition of a human being with a brute; *necrophilia*, erotic satisfaction obtained by physical sexual contact with a corpse (a practice prevalent in ancient Egypt especially, where mummification of corpses of the nobility, both male and female, was common); *fetishism*, an act in which the person obtains sexual gratification "onanistically" with the aid of a symbol, usually a symbol of the loved object; *transvestism*, putting on the clothing of the opposite sex for purposes of erotic satisfaction; *scoptophilia*, the avid viewing of the external sex organs or of actual sex acts for the purpose of obtaining sex excitation; *voyeurism*, defined as "pathological indulgence in looking at some form of nudity as a source of gratification in place of the normal sex act." Under this heading we must also include *obscenity*, *pornography*, *lasciviousness* (Gal. 5:19), *lewdness*, *exhibitionism* (indecent exposure), etc.

*Homosexual activity*, even though it involves another person, belongs in the category of solitary sex acts because the erotic pleasure is confined to the one who plays the role of the active agent in the perversion. Homosexuality may stem from a glandular dysfunction; generally, however, it seems to be psychological in origin, that is, a habit formed in adolescence which results in such a weakening of the will that the victim, in adulthood, lacks the mental and physical strength to cast it off. In the end, its effect, like that of alcoholism, is often pathological; obviously, it is *not* a natural use of the sex function. Many eminent authorities speak of it as a "congenital anomaly" rather than a disease. Usually the homosexual possesses characteristic psychic and physical traits of the opposite sex. *Pederasty* is carnal copulation of an adult as the active partner with a boy as the passive partner. *Sodomy*, basically, is defined (WNCD) as "carnal copulation with a member of the same sex or with an animal, or unnatural copulation with a member of the opposite sex." As a matter of fact, however, the term has come to be used in many legal codes for all kinds of sex perversion. History proves that in cultures in which homosexuality has become a practice woman has never been accorded any particularly honorable status; moreover, that the spread of the perversion throughout the population, as in the days of the so-called "Enlightenment" in Athens and in those of the Empire in Rome, is an unfailing mark of national decadence. The morale of a people depends upon the national morality; and the national standard of morality depends very largely on the nation's sex morality. Socrates, in Athens, had his "beloved"—his name was Alcibiades. Plato winked at the practice. Pericles, the great Athenian statesman, on the other hand, despised it. And Aristotle deplored it, criticizing Plato for his seeming tolerance of the perversion. It is amazing to discover how many eminent persons in the field of literature in particular have been

enslaved by it, and one might well say, haunted by the enslavement. (See Paul's list of the vices of the pagan world, Rom. 1:18-32). Parents have a solemn obligation in our day to instruct their children about these unnatural uses of the sex function; moreover, this instruction should begin even before the child reaches adolescence. Let it never be overlooked, as Dr. Will Durant has stated so pointedly, that "the control of the sex impulse is the first principle of civilization,"—to be blunt, the first step out of the barnyard.

Any act of sex perversion is a selfish prostitution of the sex function: it gives pleasure only to the one who performs the act, and physical pleasure only. In the true conjugal union, however, one that is sanctified by mutual love, the participants enjoy the planned sharing of the bliss, one with the other; indeed this bliss is enhanced by the fact that each participant is thinking in terms of what is being contributed to the enjoyment of the other: the satisfaction thus becomes spiritual and not exclusively physical. There is a vast difference here, difference which evinces the sanctity of the conjugal union and the superiority of monogamy as a selective institution. Let us remember that "love is a permanent and fixed attitude which puts the interest of the one loved above the interests of the lover; the reversal of this sacrificial quality is the fallacy which permeates Fletcher's so-called "situationist ethics," which in essence is the advocacy of sheer selfishness.

The physiological sex union of husband and wife in the conjugal relation has by divine ordination a twofold purpose: it is *procreative*, i.e., it guarantees the preservation of the race, and it is *unitive* in that it enhances the intimacy of the conjugal relation. Obviously, because homosexuality thwarts these ends of marriage, it is *unnatural*. On the basis of the Principle of Universalization, namely, that the moral validity of a human act is to be

realistically tested by considering what the consequences would be if every human being did it under the same or similar circumstances, indubitably homosexuality would destroy the race in short order. Hence the Divine pronouncements recorded in Gen. 1:26-31; 2:18, 21-25. It simply is *not good* for the man to be alone: under such conditions his potentialities could never be realized and the race would die "aborning." Moreover, in every case of addiction to the practice, it could serve only to debase the intimacy of the marriage relation and so to vitiate the very character and design of the conjugal union. Sexual coition without love is simply that of the brute. On the other hand, coition sanctified by love, is treated in Scripture as an allegory of the mystical relationship between Christ and His Bride, the Church. (Cf. the entire Song of Solomon; also Eph. 5:22-33, 2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 21:1-4, etc.). (Suggested reading: *The Sexual Offender and His Offenses*, by Benjamin Karpman, M.D., Julian Press, Inc., New York, 1954).

In view of all these facts, we are not surprised to find that *sodomy* is anathematized throughout both the Old and New Testaments as an abomination to God, and that the terrible judgment which descended on Sodom and Gomorrah is repeatedly cited as a warning to all people who would tolerate such iniquity. Thus the name of Sodom itself has become a byword among all peoples whose God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. See, on sodomy, Exo. 22:19, Judg. 19:22ff; Lev. 18:22-23, 20:13-16, 20:23; Rom. 1:24-27, 9:29; 1 Cor. 6:9, 1 Tim. 1:10; on sodomites, Deut. 23:17-18; 1 Ki. 14:23-24, 15:12, 22:46; 2 Ki. 23:7; on the divine judgment visited on the Cities of the Plain, Deut. 29:23, 32:32; Isa. 1:9-10, 3:9, 13:19; Jer. 20:15, 49:17-18, 23:13-15, 50:40; Ezek. 16:46-51, 53:58; Lam. 4:6; Amos 4:11, Hos. 11:8, Zeph. 2:9; Matt. 10:15, 11:23-24; Luke 10:12, 17:28-30; 2 Pet. 2:6; Judge 7, Rev. 11:8.

## 5. Lot's Deliverance (vv. 12-17)

12 And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son-in-law; and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whomsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of the place: 13 for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxed great before Jehovah; and Jehovah hath sent us to destroy it. 14 And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law, who married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for Jehovah will destroy the city. But he seemed unto his sons-in-law as one that mocked. 15 And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters that are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. 16 But he lingered; and the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, Jehovah being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. 17 And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the Plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

As the night wore on, filled with clamor, no doubt, and violence, the heavenly visitors vehemently assured Lot that the city faced certain destruction and warned him to gather together with all speed every member of his family if he would save them from the impending catastrophe. Lot did as he was advised, but his warning was lost on his sons-in-law, whose thinking was so debased that they did not take him seriously; indeed they seemed to get the idea that he was making sport of them (cf. Judg. 16:25). Note v. 12, "son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, (and whomsoever thou hast in the city." Cf. v. 14, "sons-in-law who married his daughters." Various suggestions have been made to clarify these relationships: (1) that he

had no sons, only daughters, and the reference in v. 12 is to the sons of his married daughters; (2) that v. 12 had reference to sons-in-law whom Lot regarded as sons. How can this be clarified in the light of v. 14, "sons-in-law, who married his daughters," marginal rendering, "were to marry," hence only prospective sons-in-law? Rashi holds that there were two sets of sons-in-law; Ibn Ezra also explains that other sons-in-law are intended, namely, married to daughters who had died, as supported by the phrase, "thy two daughters that *are here*," which implies that there were others who were no longer *here*, *i.e.*, no longer alive. (See SC, 95). Speiser points up the ambiguity of this phrase, "two daughters that are here," meaning, literally, "within reach, present, at hand," which, he says "could mean either pledged but still at home, or unattached altogether" (EG, 140). (KD, COPT, 234): V. 15 "refers not to the daughters who were still in the father's house, as distinguished from those who were married, but his wife and two daughters who were to be found with him in the house, in distinction from the bridegrooms, who also belonged to him, but were not yet living with him, and who had received his summons in scorn, because in their carnal security they did not believe in any judgment of God (Luke 17:28-29). If Lot had married daughters, he would undoubtedly have called upon them to escape along with their husbands, his sons-in-law." There need be no significant dilemma here: as stated (SIBG, 242): "either Lot's virgin-daughters had been only betrothed to them [his sons-in-law, v. 14], or Lot had other daughters who perished in the flames." Lange (CDHCG, 438): "We may add that there is no intimation that Lot had warned married daughters to rise up." The consensus seems to be that the two virgin daughters (v. 8) who were with Lot in his house, and who later escaped, were about to be married to men of Sodom.

*Lot's Reluctance.* "When the morning arose," that is, just before the sunrise, "the angels hastened Lot," etc. Why the haste? "So that Sodom's destruction might take place at sunrise, the sun being their chief deity; thus its impotence to save its worshipers would be demonstrated" (SC, 95). But "Lot lingered." Still tied to his possessions! Lange, *ibid.*, 438): "It is clear in every way that Lot, from his spiritless, half-hearted nature, which made it difficult to part from his location and possessions, was rescued with the greatest difficulty." Lot, like Ephraim (Hos. 7:8, Ephraim being the name commonly given to the northern kingdom of Israel) was "a cake not turned." That is, he had never truly forsaken the world, the flesh, and the devil. Like many church members in our day, he—somewhat reluctantly, to be sure—kept one face turned toward the God of Abraham, but he lived much of his life with his real face always turned in the direction of the allurements of this present evil world (2 Tim. 4:10); he had just enough religion probably to make him uncomfortable, but not enough to make him genuinely happy. Hence, when the day dawned, his heavenly visitors broke off any further delay by laying hold of him, and his wife, and his two daughters, and literally dragging them out of the doomed city, bidding them flee to the neighboring mountains of Moab for safety. "*Jehovah being merciful unto him*": Does this mean that the angels sought to speed him while God was still merciful? Or does it mean that he was delivered, not on the ground of his own merit, but solely through God's mercy? A third view: "Although he was to be saved for Abraham's sake, through his lingering he might have forfeited this privilege but for God's mercy" (SC, 95). This completes the work of the two angels in saving Lot: now the divine judgment is ready to be executed.

6. *The Flight to Zoar* (vv. 18-22)

18 *And Lot said unto them, Ob, not so, my lord: 19 behold now, thy servant hath found favor in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy lovingkindness, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest evil overtake me, and I die: 20 behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one. Ob let me escape thither (is it not a little one?), and my soul shall live. 21 And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow the city of which thou hast spoken. 22 Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.*

Note in v. 17, Lot's mode of address, "my Lord," marginal rendering, "O Lord." Does this mean that Yehwe Himself has arrived on the scene (cf. again, 18:1, 3, also 22, where Jehovah is represented as remaining behind to converse with Abraham, after the two angels had gone on their way, etc.), or that He has been present all along in the person of *the Angel of Yabweh*? (Read Lange on "The Angel of Jehovah," *infra*.) Whitelaw (PCG, 255): "*Adonai*, which should rather be translated Lord; whence it would almost seem as if Lot knew that his interlocutor was Jehovah. Keil admits that Lot recognised a manifestation of God in the angels, and Lange speaks of a miraculous report of the voice of God coming to him along with the miraculous vision of the angels. That the historian uses 'them' instead of 'him' only proves that at the time Jehovah was accompanied by the angels, as he had previously been at Mamre (18:1)." Concerning the address, "my Lord," the Rabbis construe this as God (SC, 96).

It seems that even now Lot could not tear himself away altogether from his worldly environment. This reluctance,

coupled with fear that those who had been his fellow-citizens might hunt him down and kill him, caused him to plead that one of the five cities might be preserved as his dwelling-place, because it was a little one; whence this city, previously known as *Bela*, (was called Zoar "tiny place," "little"). (Cf. Gen. 13:10; 14:2-8). This petition, though evidently "a singular display of moral obtuseness and indolent selfishness," was granted, and Lot and his daughters entered Zoar at sunrise. "Lot bases his plea on the favor that has been bestowed on him. He reinforces it by a plea of physical inability to reach the mountains. He claims the evil from which God is delivering him will overtake him nevertheless—not a very commendable attitude. Finally, he makes the smallness of the place that he has in mind a plea for sparing it, in case he flees thither. It almost taxes the reader's patience to bear with this long-winded plea at a moment of such extreme danger. Lot appreciated but little what was being done for him" (EG, 566). (Cf. also Gen. 36:32-33, 46:21; Num. 26:38-40; 1 Chron. 1:43-44, 5:8, 7:6-7, 8:1, 3). This town, *Bela*, or *Zoar*, which was well known in Old Testament times, lay to the southeast of the Dead Sea (Gen. 13:10, Deut. 34:3, Isa. 15:5, Jer. 48:34). During the Roman hegemony an—perhaps *another*—earthquake occurred and the town was flooded, but it was rebuilt farther up from the shore and inhabited until the Middle Ages.

#### 7. *The Divine Judgment Executed* (vv. 23-29)

23 *The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot came unto Zoar.* 24 *Then Jehovah rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven;* 25 *and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.* 26 *But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.* 27 *And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he had*

*stood before Jehovah: 28 and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the Plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace.*

*29 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 overbrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt.*

(1) At sunrise "Jehovah rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven," etc. "Fire from Jehovah": probably for emphasis to make it clear that this was a judgment *from the Lord* and not a natural phenomenon. (SIBG, 243, comment on v. 17): "The Angel *Jehovah* has now come up from Abraham, and charged Lot and his companions to depart with the utmost haste, and without the smallest regret, from that rich country abounding with sensual indulgence (Luke 9:62; Phil. 3:13, 14; Matt. 24:16-18)." The Divine command was, "Escape for thy life," that is, "it is enough that you save your life; do not try to save your wealth also."

(2) Obviously, from correlation of various Scriptures, the cities destroyed were not only Sodom and Gomorrah, but also Admah and Zeboiim (cf. Amos 4:11, Isa. 1:9, 10; Gen. 14, Deut. 29:23, Hos. 11:8), Bela, or Zoar, of the five cities of the Jordan circle being exempted, in response to Lot's appeal, vv. 21, 22. Note v. 22: the catastrophes wrought by God are always under His control: "this one is not unleashed until Lot has safely reached Zoar; by that time the sun has fully risen."

(3) The nature of the catastrophe has been a matter of much speculation. The means causing the destruction are said to have been "brimstone and fire" ("sulphur and fire") poured out so plentifully on the doomed cities that God is said to have "rained" them down "out of heaven."

Was this divinely-sent infliction "burning pitch," or lightning which ignited the bituminous soil, or a volcanic eruption which overwhelmed the whole area? Whitelaw (PCG, 256): "Whatever it was, it was clearly miraculous in its nature, and designed as a solemn punitive infliction on the cities of the plain." The account has been properly designated that "of one of the most horrifying events in all history," and is presented as such throughout both the Old and New Testaments. The lesson is inescapable, namely, *that when a city, or nation, becomes given over wholly to iniquity, that city or nation forfeits its right to exist, because its very existence inevitably spreads this moral pollution to all neighboring peoples and even those of the regions beyond. There is no limit to the infection of concentrated vice. Therefore, there is but one step for Absolute Justice to take; that is, to destroy utterly. History proves that repeatedly, in the account of man's sojourn on earth, the destruction of a nation, or at least of a nation's power, has become a moral necessity.* (Cf. Ezek. 21:27, Jer. 18:5-10, Exo. 17:14-15, Deut. 25:17-19, 1 Sam. 15, Rev. 19:11-16, etc.). Lange (CDHCG, 438): "The decisive execution of the judgment proceeds from the manifestation of Jehovah upon the earth, in company with the two angels, but the source of the decree of judgment lies in Jehovah in heaven."

Some authorities hold that an earthquake caused the catastrophic destruction of these doomed cities. *E.g.*, "The text enables us to locate the catastrophe (an earthquake) in the southern part of the Dead Sea. The subsidence of the southern half of the Dead Sea bed is known to be recent as geologists reckon, and the whole district is geologically unstable" (JB, 37). Others think that an earthquake may have accompanied the burning, and others suggest a volcanic eruption may have been used to effect the divine judgment. Still others would have it that the area in question was submerged beneath the waters of

the Dead Sea (cf. Gen. 14:3). However, the Genesis account says nothing about the drowning of lands or cities (although the idea is found in writings of Hellenistic-Roman times). The expression "brimstone and fire" does suggest volcanic phenomena, such as swallowed up the Roman Pompeii. "But geologists tell us that the most recent volcanic activity in that area took place ages before Abraham's time" (Kraeling, BA, 72). Again, the language of Gen. 19:29 certainly does suggest, at first glance, an earthquake; however, the narrative itself attributes the cataclysm to some kind of igneous agency. "Sulphur and fire," writes Speiser, should be "sulphurous fire," adding, "the context points plainly to hendiadys" (ABG, 141). Writes Leupold (EG, 568): "Nothing points directly to a volcanic eruption; nor do lava remains happen to be found in the immediate vicinity. Nor does the expression 'overthrow' necessarily point to an earthquake. The 'fire' which rained down from heaven may have been lightning. The 'sulphur' may have been miraculously wrought and so have rained down together with the lightnings, although there is the other possibility that a huge explosion of highly inflammable materials, including sulphur, deposited in the ground (cf. 'bitumen pits' of 14:10) may have cast these materials, especially the sulphur, high into the air so that they rained upon these cities, causing a vast conflagration. Besides, it seems quite likely that after these combustible materials once took fire, the very site of the cities was literally burnt away to quite a depth, and so the waters of the northern part of the Dead Sea filled in the burnt-out area. For it is a well-known fact that the southern end of the Dead Sea hardly exceeds a depth of twelve feet and usually runs much less, *i.e.*, three or four feet. In fact, at certain points it is by no means difficult to wade across the lake. On the other hand, the northern portion reaches a maximum depth of 1300 feet. To assume, then, that the entire lake is the result of this 'overthrow,' as some

have, hardly seems reasonable or in conformity with the Biblical account. A conflagration that would have burnt out the ground to a depth of 1,300 feet cannot be conceived. An earthquake, causing so deep and so broad a fissure in the earth's crust, would at least have called for the use of the term 'earthquake' in this connection, for, apparently, in violence it would have surpassed all earthquakes of which man has a record. Equally difficult would be the assumption that the Jordan once flowed through this delightful valley of the Pentapolis and poured its water into the Elanitic Gulf." Again, with reference to the word "overthrow," v. 29: "Only that which stands up can be 'overthrown.' Consequently the verb connotes something of the idea of proud men and institutions being brought low by the Lord who 'throws down the mighty from their seats' and lays iniquity prostrate." (Cf. Deut. 29:23, Isa. 13:19; Jer. 49:18, 50:40; Amos 4:11).

It has been rightly said that "an air of mystery hovers over the location of the cities of the plain." Tradition had it for centuries that they were immediately north of the Dead Sea, a notion arising no doubt from the vague identification of the Vale of Siddim with the "Salt Sea" (Gen. 14:3). (See Part 27 *supra*). However, the names of Sodom and Zoar continued, even down to Roman times, to be associated with the area south of the Dead Sea. The archaeologists, G. Ernest Wright, assumes, with W. F. Albright, that the destroyed cities were buried beneath the shallow waters of the *southern* tip of the Dead Sea. Recently E. G. Kraeling has questioned this identification. He writes (BA, 70-71): "Recent writers of the highest competence have been willing to assume that Sodom and Gomorrah lay by the Dead Sea shore and that they were submerged by the rise of the waters. However, the land suitable for agriculture was precious in a country like Palestine, and was reserved for that purpose. *One must therefore look for the sites of Sodom, Gomorrah, and Zoar*

*on higher ground and back from the lake.* Their destruction would have been due to other agencies than the waters of the Dead Sea. The names of the cities are certainly not invented. Sodom and Zoar, furthermore, still occur as names of inhabited places south of the Dead Sea area in the fourth century A.D., and the former name clings to *Jebel Sudum*, as local natives called it, or *Jebel Usdum*, as it has become known since Robinson to this day. These Christian towns may not have stood on the identical sites of the ancient ones, but presumably were close enough to them to preserve the old names. All indications point to their having lain near the southern end of the Dead Sea. . . . If one looks at the area on the south end of the Dead Sea, one notes first of all that on the west side there is no suitable location for any habitations, because the brooks that enter in here near the *Jebel Usdum* are salty. Far different, however, is the situation *on the eastern side of the south end of the Dead Sea.*" Kraeling goes on to show why this region may well have been the original site of the doomed cities, concluding that "only further exploration and some excavation can shed light on the old cities of this neighborhood." Cornfeld writes (AtD, 68) that at the southern end of the Dead Sea there is "the deepest rift valley in the world, which lies 1290 feet below sea level." He goes on to say that "earthquakes or some other destructive agents seem to have wiped out a civilization that had existed near the Dead Sea and east of the Jordan from the Stone Age (4000 B.C.E.) down to the Bronze Age (around the 20th century):" "This," he says, "is the area which included the 'five cities of the Plain,' or 'the circle of the vale of Siddim.' . . . It is thought by those who favor the geological theory, that these cities were situated south and east of the Dead Sea, most of them being now covered by the water. We know also that nomadic peoples settled down in villages and towns before the 20th century B.C.E., just at the time when the dark age was settling over Palestine,

due, apparently, to Amorite invasions, and that these sites were abandoned about the 20th century B.C.E., as were other towns and villages in southern Transjordan for some mysterious reason, the people returning to nomadic pursuits." Note also this comment in similar vein (BWDBA, 543): "The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the valley may have been the result of lightning igniting the petroleum seepages and the gas which was plentiful in the region. About five miles from the shore of the Dead Sea at an elevation of five hundred feet, southeast of the Lisan peninsula is 'Bab ed-Dra,' which served as a religious shrine for inhabitants of the area. Pottery indicates that the site was frequented from ca. 2300 B.C. to ca. 1900 B.C. This seems to indicate that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed ca. 1900 B.C., during the lifetime of Abraham. From near Hebron, Abraham looked in the direction of Sodom and Gomorrah and he saw that 'the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.'" To sum up here, we may indeed have in this narrative a picture of an event that was both natural and supernatural (miraculous): God may have used natural means of bringing about the catastrophe which fell on these doomed cities; it can hardly be denied, however, that the *timing* and the *design* of the event lay outside the realm of the natural. (We use the word "natural" here in its proper sense, *i.e.*, as simply the name we give to observed phenomena).

*Lot's Wife.* The Divine command had been clear and the urgency of it unmistakable: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee," etc. We cannot, of course determine whether the woman was motivated by "longing, pity, or curiosity" (Delitzsch) when she did "look back." Note that she looked back "from behind him," *i.e.*, her husband. This seems to indicate that she was bringing up the rear and it certainly bespeaks her reluctance to leave behind her the "flesh-pots" of Sodom. (Cf. Exo. 16:1-3).

"Evidently her heart was in the city. She appreciated but little what the delivering angels had done for her. Almost escaped, she allowed her vigilance to relax. So she became a warning example to all who do not make a clear-cut break with the life of wickedness, as Jesus' remarkable warning designates her (Luke 17:32). God's punishment overtook her on the spot, apparently through the agents already operative in the destruction" (EG, 571). *It is most interesting to note here that Lot's wife is the only woman—of the many who appear in Biblical story—whom we are exhorted to "remember," and that by our Lord Himself.* (Cf. Matt. 26:13).

The woman became "a pillar of salt." At the time, Lot and his daughters could not have seen this: they did have sense enough (and some faith, it seems) to have realized that looking back would have meant their destruction. We see no reason for assuming that Lot's wife was instantaneously transformed into a pillar of salt: a more probable interpretation would be that she was overcome by the sulphurous vapors and afterward became encrusted with salt. It would be most unreasonable for us in this twentieth century to assume that this tragic—one might say, mummified—figure could have survived the elements for any great length of time, much less for a time-span of four milleniums. It is a matter of common sense to hold that attempts at identification, either past or present, must be fruitless. (Cf. the apocryphal book of Wisdom [10:7, "a pillar of salt . . . a memorial of the unbelieving soul"] ). We would agree, however, with Leupold (EG, 572), that "in the days shortly after the catastrophe the salt-encrusted, crudely pillar-like remains of the unhappy woman were to be seen."

*Abraham's Last View* of the evidences of the catastrophe is portrayed in a few poignant sentences. Very early in the morning he returned to the spot whither he had accompanied his celestial visitors the day before (18:22),

and from which, in the vicinity of Hebron, he could look to the east, across the Jordan plain, to the hill country and mountainous region beyond (later the home of the Moabites). What was his purpose? No doubt to satisfy himself as to whether ten righteous men had been found in Sodom and the city spared; in general, to see what actually had happened. And what was the sight that greeted him? It was total destruction; only the smoke of the land of the plain where once these thriving cities flourished "went up as the smoke of a furnace." Whitelaw (PCG, 257): "Thus the appalling catastrophe proclaimed its reality to Abraham; to subsequent ages it stamped a witness of its severity (1) *upon the region itself*, in the black and desolate aspect it has ever since possessed; (2) *upon the page of inspiration*, being by subsequent Scripture writers constantly referred to as a standing warning against incurring the Almighty's wrath . . . and (3) *upon the course of ancient tradition*, which it powerfully affected." (See esp. Tacitus, *Histories*, V. 7; for traditional references to the event, see Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Pliny, Ovid, etc.). Jamieson (CECG, 164): "From the height which overlooks Hebron, where the patriarch stood, the observer at the present day has an extensive view spread out before him towards the Dead Sea. A cloud of smoke rising from the plain would be visible to a person at Hebron now, and could have been, therefore, to Abraham as he looked toward Sodom on the morning of its destruction." What an awesome spectacle this was that was spread out before the eyes of Abraham on that fateful morning!

Skinner (ICCG, 310): "Abraham's morning visit to the spot where he had parted from his heavenly guests forms an impressive close to the narrative . . . an effective contrast to 18:16." Speiser (ABG, 143): "As Abraham peered anxiously at the scene of the disaster, from the distant heights of Hebron, he had his answer to the question he had posed the night before. A pall of dense vapors

was all that could be seen. All life was extinguished. The author is much too fine an artist to spell out the viewer's thoughts, and the close of the narrative is all the more eloquent for this omission." This is a characteristic of the Bible throughout: in so many instances it tends to speak more forcefully by what it omits than by what it tells us. The most impressive example of this is in the Lord's narrative of the Forgiving Father (Luke 15:11-32).

It is charged by the critics that the Genesis story of Lot's wife's inglorious end is just another version of an ancient folk tale. Alleged similarity of the Greek legend of Orpheus and Eurydice is cited as a corresponding example. According to this legend, after his return from the Argonautic expedition, Orpheus lived in Thrace, where he married Eurydice. His wife having died as a result of the bite of a serpent, Orpheus followed her into Hades, where his sweet music alleviated temporarily the torments of the damned, and enabled him to win her back. His prayer was granted, however, on one condition, namely, that he should not look back at his wife until they had arrived in the upper world. At the very last moment "the anxiety of love" overcame the poet and he looked around to make sure that his wife was following him, only to see her snatched back into the infernal regions. The mythological tale of Niobe is another example of the case in point. As the alleged wife of the king of Thebes, Niobe, filled with pride over the number of her children, deemed herself superior to Leto, who had given birth to only two (Apollo and Artemis, by Zeus). Apollo and Artemis, indignant as such presumption, slew all her children with their arrows, and Niobe herself was metamorphosed by Zeus into a stone which during the summer always shed tears. We can only affirm here that to find any parallels, in *motivation* especially, between these fantastic tales and the fate of Lot's wife, must require the activity of a profane mentality. The awesome manifestation of Divine

judgment (though tempered with mercy where possible) on a population given over wholly to iniquity, one in which Lot's wife perished because of her unwillingness to break with her environment, cannot reasonably be put in the same category with these folk tales which reflect only human passion, pride, jealousy and revenge. Leupold (EG, 565): "Because the command not to look around is met with in heathen legends . . . that fact does not yet make every command of that sort in Israelitish history a part of a legendary account. We ourselves may on occasion bid another to look around without being on our part involved in some legendary transaction."

*Recapitulation*, v. 29. The interesting fact in this statement is the change in the name of God from Jehovah to *Elohim*. The total destruction of the hotbeds of iniquity—the Cities of the Plain—was a display of Divine Powers which causes men to fear the Sovereign of the universe; therefore "Elohim" and not "Yahweh." (Cf. Gen. 28:17, Heb. 10:31, 12:29, etc.). The destruction of the cities of the plain was not at this moment viewed by the writer as an event related to the Abrahamic covenant and intercession, but as a sublime vindication of Divine (Absolute) Justice. Nor should the fact be overlooked that in this transaction "God remembered Abraham," that is, Lot was not delivered simply for his own sake, but primarily for Abraham's sake. "The blessings that go forth from one true-hearted servant of God are incalculable," Cf. Jas. 5:16-18.

*The Import of the Account of the Catastrophe that befell the Cities of the Plain* is clearly indicated by the repeated references to it throughout both the Old and New Testaments, as a warning against incurring the wrath of the Almighty (Deut. 29:22-23; Isa. 13:19; Jer. 49:18, 50:40; Lam. 4:6; Amos 4:11; Luke 17:32; 2 Pet. 2:6, Jude 7). Cf. J. A. Motyer (NBD, 1003): "The story of Sodom does not merely warn, but provides a theologically

documented account of divine judgment implemented by 'natural' disaster. The history is faith's guarantee that the Judge of all the earth does right (Gn. 18:25). Being personally persuaded of its justice and necessity (Gn. 18:20, 21), God acts; but in wrath He remembers mercy, and in judgment discrimination (Gn. 19:16, 29)." "The fate of Sodom and Gomorrah is referred to by Jesus as a warning to those who are inhospitable to the Gospel, Matt. 10:15. Sodom is a symbol for dead bodies lying in the street of a city, Rev. 11:8" (HBD, 692). "The plain in which the cities stood, hitherto fruitful 'as the garden of Jehovah,' became henceforth a scene of perfect desolation. Our Lord Himself, and the Apostles Peter and Jude, have clearly taught the lasting lesson which is involved in the judgment: that it is a type of the final destruction by fire of a world which will have reached a wickedness like that of Sodom and Gomorrah" (OTH, 77). Cf. Luke 17:29, 2 Pet. 2:6, 2 Thess. 1:7-10, 1 Cor. 3:13; Heb. 10:27, 12:29; Jude 7; Rev. 14:10 20:14-15; cf. Exo. 3:2, 19:18; Isa. 66:15-16; Ezek. 1:13ff.; Dan. 7:9, Matt. 25:41, etc. The partial judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah, like the universal judgment of the flood, serves as an example—and a type—of all the divine judgments, and especially of the Last Judgment; hence in Scripture the two are closely associated (Luke 17:26-32, 2 Pet. 2:4-9). The Last Judgment is the Second Death (Rev. 20:14, 21:8).

8. *Lot's Last End* (vv. 30-38)

30 *And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.* 31 *And the first-born said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: 32 come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie*

*with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. 33 And they made their father drink wine that night: and the first-born went in, and lay with her father: and he knew not when she lay down, nor when she arose. 34 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the first-born said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yester-night with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. 35 And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he knew not when she lay down, nor when she arose. 36 Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. 37 And the first-born bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day. 38 And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Ben-ammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day.*

*The Flight to Zoar.* Lot and his two daughters reached Zoar some time after sunrise. Evidently he did not stop there, however, but kept on going until he found a cave where he continued to dwell, for how long we do not know. "Lot's rescue is ascribed to Elohim, as the Judge of the whole earth, not to the covenant God, Jehovah, because Lot in his separation from Abraham was removed from the special providence of Jehovah. In his flight from Sodom he seems to have been driven by a paralyzing fear: just how much of the obedience of faith was involved it is impossible to say. (We must remember that *fear is the opposite of faith*). Evidently a kind of paralyzing terror gave way to a calculating fear which has been properly designated an "unbelieving fear." At any rate he kept on until he could bury himself and his daughters in a cave. Caves are said to be numerous in these mountains of Moab. He knew, evidently, that it had been decreed that Zoar also was to be destroyed and had been

spared only because he could not reach the mountain in time. Now that there was time to go on, naturally he feared that the decree would be fulfilled. Or it is possible that the inhabitants of Zoar who had been spared did not feel too hospitably inclined to this family who had once been inhabitants of the cities now lying in ruins. Lange (CDHCG, 442): "The chastising hand of God is seen in the gravest form, in the fact that Lot is lost in the darkness of the mountains of Moab, as a dweller in the caves. But it may be questioned whether one is justified by this, in saying that he came to a bad end. . . . His not returning poor and shipwrecked can be explained upon better grounds. In any case the testimony for him, 2 Pet. 2:7-8, must not be overlooked. There remains one bright point in his life, since he sustained the assaults of all Sodom on his house, in the most extreme danger of his life." To this Gosman adds (*ibid.*, 442): "It may be said, moreover, that his leaving home and property at the divine warning, and when there were yet no visible signs of the judgment, and his flight without looking back, indicate the reality and genuineness of his faith." This again raises the question: Was Lot's flight *without looking back* entirely an act of faith, or was it indicative primarily of a paralyzing terror? Of course it may be that the inhabitants of Zoar, panic-stricken, had fled from the region of danger and dispersed themselves for a time in the adjacent mountains. At any rate Lot is now far from the habitations of men, with his two daughters as his only companions.

*The Origins of Moab and Ammon* (vv. 30-38). There is great variability of opinion as to what motivated Lot's daughters to resort to deception to cause themselves to be impregnated by their father. These, of course, were incestuous unions, severely condemned even by primitive peoples extant in our own day. It is not difficult to see how repugnant such an act was to the Israelites of a later age. At some point in this phase of Lot's life, his daughters

resolved to procure children through him, and for that purpose on two successive evenings they made him intoxicated with wine, and then lay with him through the night, one after the other, that they might conceive seed. "To this accursed crime they were impelled by the desire to preserve their family, because they thought there was no man on earth to come in unto them, *i.e.*, to marry them, 'after the manner of all the earth.' Not that they imagined the whole human race to have perished in the destruction of the valley of Siddim, but because they were afraid that no man would link himself with them, the only survivors of a country smitten by the curse of God" (BCOPT, 237). We can hardly agree with the charge that these young women "took advantage of Lot's inebriation to indulge incestuous passion" for the simple reason that the text does not justify such a conclusion. Of course, even though it was not lust which impelled them to this shameful deed, "their conduct was worthy of Sodom, and shows quite as much as their previous betrothal to men of Sodom, that they were deeply imbued with the sinful character of that city." In all likelihood, incest was not under any taboo in Sodom. As for Lot himself, vv. 33 and 35 do not state that he was in an unconscious state: they simply tell us that in his intoxicated condition, though not entirely unconscious, yet he lay with his daughters without clearly understanding what he was doing. It surely would be stretching the truth, however, to say that his behavior in this instance was that of a strong man. "Lot's daughters are, like Tamar, not here regarded as shameless; their ruling motive is to perpetuate the race" (JB, 37). Jamieson summarizes as follows (CECG, 165): The theory is suggested that "the moral sensibilities of Lot's daughters had been blunted, or rather totally extinguished, by long and familiar association with the people of the Pentapolis, and that they had already sunk to the lowest depths of depravity, when they could in concert deliberately plan the

commission of incest with their own father. But this first impression will soon be corrected or removed by the recollection that those young women, though living in the midst of a universally corrupt society, had yet maintained a virtuous character (v. 8); and therefore it must be presumed that it was through the influence of some strong, overpowering motive they were impelled to the adoption of so base an imposture. It could not be, as has been generally supposed, that they believed themselves to be the sole survivors of mankind; for they knew that the inhabitants of Zoar were still alive, and if they were now residing in a cave in the Moabite mountains, they must have seen multitudes of laborers working in the vineyards with which those heights were extensively planted. They could not be actuated, therefore, with the wish to preserve the human race, which, in their view, was all but extinct. Their object must have been very different, and most probably it was this. Cherishing some family traditions respecting the promised seed, and in expectation of which Abraham, with Lot and others, had migrated to Canaan, they brooded in despondency over the apparent loss of that hope—since their mother's death; and believing that their father, who was descended from the eldest branch of Terah's family, and who was an object of God's special charge to the angels, had the best claim to be the ancestor of the distinguished progeny, they agreed together to use means for securing the much-longed-for result. This view of their conduct is strongly confirmed by the circumstance that, instead of being ashamed of their crime, or concealing the origin of their children by some artfully-contrived story, they proclaimed it to the world, and perpetuated the memory of it by the names they bestowed upon their children; the eldest calling her son *Moab*" (meaning, "from my father"), "and the younger designating her son *Benammi*" ("son of my people"). It is evident from the text that these sexual relations of Lot's daughters with their father

occurred only *this once*: there is no intimation that it was a continuous affair or even repeated. That they used subterfuge (their father's intoxication) to accomplish their purposes seems to be additional evidence that they themselves regarded what they did as repugnant, but under the circumstances as the only means possible to secure the perpetuation of the family. The whole affair apparently is a case in point of the old—and *false*—cliche, that "the end justifies the means." We might add that Lot's susceptibility to inebriation certainly does not add one iota of glamor to his character. We feel that Speiser's treatment of this incident (ABG, 145) should be given here as follows (even though we cannot fully agree with it): "As they are here portrayed, Lot and his two daughters had every reason to believe that they were the last people on earth. From the recesses of their cave somewhere up the side of a canyon formed by the earth's deepest rift, they could see no proof to the contrary. The young women were concerned with the future of the race, and they were resolute enough to adopt the only desperate measure that appeared to be available. The father, moreover, was not a conscious party to the scheme. All this adds up to praise rather than blame." (Note that incest is defined and strictly forbidden in Scripture: Lev. 18:6-18; 20:11, 12, 17, 19-21; Deut. 22:30; 27:20, 22, 23; Ezek. 22:11; cf. 1 Cor. 5:1. Cases of incest: Lot with his daughters, Gen. 19:31, 36; Reuben, Gen. 35:22, 49:4; Judah, Gen. 38:16-18, 1 Chron. 2:4; Amnon, 2 Sam. 13:14; Absalom, 2 Sam. 16:21, 22. Cf. also Gen. 20:12, 13; Gen. 11:29; Exo. 6:20). Note the following significant paragraph: "Grace, in conversion, seldom takes away the original character of the natural man, but merely overrules its deficiencies to humble him and warn others; and refines and elevates its excellencies; and thus, by the Spirit, mortifies the old while it quickens and establishes the new man" (SIBG, 244).

Finally, this comment of Skinner (ICCG, 312), who follows rather closely the so-called "analytical" interpretation of Genesis, "Whatever truth there may be in the speculations," *i.e.*, about the origins and character of the patriarchal stories, "the religious value of the biblical narrative is not affected. Like the Deluge-story, it retains the power to touch the conscience of the world as a terrible example of divine vengeance on heinous wickedness and unnatural lust; and in this ethical purpose we have another testimony to the unique grandeur of the idea of God in ancient Israel." But let us not forget that "vengeance" on God's part is *not revenge, but vindication*, that is, the vindication of God's absolute justice in not permitting His purposes and laws to be violated with impunity. Penal infliction of the right kind must have for its primary end the sustaining of the *majesty of law* against all transgressors. This, we are told, will be the essential character of the Last Judgment (Rom. 2:5, Rev. 20:11-12).

*The History of Lot ends here.* According to Robinson, the Arabs have a tradition that he was buried on Beni-Naim, the elevated spot where Abraham stood before the Lord interceding for Sodom and from which next morning he viewed the smoke rising from the distant destruction. "Lot is never mentioned again. Separated both outwardly and inwardly from Abraham, he was of no further importance in relation to the history of salvation, so that even his death is not referred to. His descendants, however, frequently come into contact with the Israelites; and the history of their descent is given here to facilitate a correct appreciation of their conduct toward Israel" (BCOTP), 238).

#### 9. *The Moabites and Ammonites*

The story of Lot, which is a kind of drama within a drama in relation to the story of Abraham, has now come to a rather inglorious end. The inspired writer "never loses sight of the fact that history, in the last analysis, is

made by individuals. But the individual, in turn, mirrors larger issues and events" (ABG, 142). Apparently the narrative is designed to lead ultimately to the story of the Moabites and the Ammonites, two ethnic groups whose history becomes interrelated to a considerable extent with the history of Israel. (The Moabites occupied the area east of the Jordan directly opposite Bethlehem, extending from Edom on the south northward to the river Arnon. Their capital city was Ar, the site of which is unknown today (Num. 21:15, 28; Isa. 15:1). The Ammonites occupied the region east of the Jordan northward from the river Arnon to the watershed of the Jabbok, on the banks of which their capital, Rabbath-Ammon (Deut. 3:11), was situated. This city lives on in our day in Amman, the capital of the Kingdom of Jordan: it was rebuilt by Ptolemy Philadelphus in the 3rd century B.C., and was named Philadelphia (cf. Rev. 3:7). The Ammonite territory was bounded on the north by Gilead, which lay almost exactly opposite Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, to the west of the Jordan.)

Generally speaking, the Moabites and Ammonites repeatedly were sources of annoyance, and at times of outright opposition to the Israelites. Their idolatrous practices are said to have been *abominations* to Jehovah. Ammon's abomination was the worship of the god Moloch, and that of Moab was the worship of the God Chemosh (1 Ki. 11:7, Num. 21:29): these were the tribal gods around whom the customary ritual of the pagan Fertility Cult was centered, an integral phase of which usually was human sacrifice (cf. 2 Ki. 3:27; Lev. 18:21, 20:2-4; Jer. 32:34-35; 2 Ki. 23:10; Amos 5:26, Acts 7:43). Their idolatrous practices included also the worship of pagan gods of surrounding peoples (Judg. 10:6). Both the Moabites and the Ammonites are frequently portrayed in Scripture as being a constant snare to the Children of Israel (as rejoicing in the latter's misfortunes and taking delight in

spreading their "abominations" of false gods among the Israelites and debasing their moral ideals through inter-marriage). (Cf. Num. 25:1-5, 1 Ki. 11:1-8, 2 Ki. 23:13, 1 Chron. 8:8, Ezra 9:1-4; Neh. 13:1-3, 23-27). Note also the predictions of divine judgments on the Moabites and the Ammonites (Isa., chs. 15, 16; Jer., chs. 48, 49; Ezek. 25:5, 8-11; Amos 2:1-2; Zeph. 2:9). As for political and military maneuvers and battles, cf. Judg. 3:12-30, 11:17-18, 11:25; Num., chs. 22-24; Josh. 24:9; Judg. 11:17-18, 11:29-33; 1 Sam. 14:47, 22:3-4; 2 Sam. 8:2; 1 Ki. 11:1-7, 2 Ki. 1:1, 3:5-27, 13:20; 2 Chron., ch. 20; Mic. 6:5, etc.).

There is another side to this coin, however, which cannot be ignored, as follows: (1) Yahweh did not permit the Israelites to distress the Moabites and Ammonites in passing through their territories because those lands had already been allotted to the children of Lot for a possession (Deut. 2:2, 9, 19). (2) Moses died in the land of Moab, where from the summit of Pisgah he was given a view of the Land of Promise, from Dan and Gilead on the North to the valley of Jericho even unto Zoar, on the South; "and the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days" (Deut. 34:1-8). (3) The book of Ruth indicates free travel and friendly relations between Judah and Moab. (4) The king of Moab brought aid to David against Saul and provided shelter for David's parents in a time of crisis (1 Sam. 22:3-4). (5) The Moabites and Ammonites are represented as having been used by Jehovah as instruments for the punishing of Judah (2 Ki. 24:1-4).

In view of these scriptures, to speak of the account of the origins of the Moabites and the Ammonites (Gen. 19:30-38) as "a fiction of Israelite animosity," "a gibe at Israel's foes," etc., as the critics have done, is absurd. Leupold (EG, 576): "Again and again critics label this whole story the outgrowth of a mean prejudice on the part

of Israel against these two neighboring nations, a hostile fabrication and an attempt to heap disgrace on them. Yet passages like Deut. 2:9 surely indicate that Israel always maintained a friendly spirit toward these brother nations, especially toward the Moabites. David's history also may serve as an antidote against such slanders. We have here an objective account of an actual historical occurrence." Similarly K-D (BCOTP, 238): "This account was neither the invention of national hatred to the Moabites and Ammonites, nor was it placed here as a brand upon these tribes. These discoveries of a criticism imbued with hostility to the Bible are overthrown by the fact, that, according to Deut. 2:9, 19, Israel was ordered not to touch the territory of each of these tribes because of their descent from Lot; and it was their unbrotherly conduct towards Israel alone which first prevented their reception into the congregation of the Lord (Deut. 23:4, 5)."

It seems, of course, that the Ammonites did become inveterate enemies of the Children of Israel. But not the Moabites, apparently. This brings us, in conclusion, to the most significant phase of the question before us, which, strange to say, seems to be overlooked by commentators generally. *That is the fact that the Moabites did play—one might well say, an indispensable role in the development of the Messianic Line. That role was played by a Moabite maiden, Ruth by name, who in the course of human events (providentially directed, no doubt) married a wealthy, land-owning Bethlehemite by the name of Boaz, by whom she became the ancestress of Obed, Jesse, and David, in the order named genealogically, and hence of Messiah Himself. The canonicity of the Book of Ruth is determined by this genealogical connection with the Messianic Line. Cf. Matt. 1:5-6, Luke 3:31-32, Isa. 9:6-7, Acts 2:29-36, Rom. 1:3-4, etc., and especially the book of Ruth.*

The Ammonites survived into the second century B.C. Judas Maccabaeus fought them in his day (1 Macc. v. 6). Moab disappeared as a political power when Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 B.C.) subjugated the country, but it persisted as an ethnic group. The Nabataeans (capital, Petra) held and developed Moab in the first two centuries B.C. and the first century A.D. (See any Dictionary of the Bible for information about the Moabite Stone).

See Gen. 19:37-38, the phrase, "unto this day." "That is, the days of Moses. They have remained Moabites unto this day, not having intermingled with strangers. Or the meaning may be: This fact is known to this day" (SC, 99). Leupold suggests "present-day Moabites" and "present-day Ammonites" as a better rendering (EG, 577).

## FOR MEDITATION AND SERMONIZING

### The Angel of Jehovah

Concerning the significance of v. 24, "Yahweh rained . . . from Yahweh out of heaven," Whitelaw writes (PCG, 256): "*From the Lord, i.e., Jehovah* (the Son) rained down from *Jehovah* (the Father), as if suggesting a distinction of persons in the Godhead (Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Athanasius, and others, Delitzsch, Lange, Wordsworth); otherwise the phrase is regarded as 'an elegancy of speech' (Ibn Ezra), 'an emphatic repetition' (Calvin), a more exact characterization of the storm (Clericus, Rosenmuller) as being *out of heaven*."

Note also the following excellent presentation by Leupold (EG, 569-570): "But what construction shall we put upon the statement, 'Yahweh rained . . . from Yahweh from the heavens'? We consider Meek's translation an evasion of the difficulty by alteration of the text, when he renders: 'The Lord rained . . . from the sky.' . . . However, there is much truth in the claim that the name of God or Yahweh is often used in solemn or emphatic utterances in place of the pronoun that would normally be expected. K.C. [Koenig's *Kommentar* on Genesis] lists the instances of this sort that have been met with in Genesis up to this point: 1:27a, 28a; 5:1b; 8:21a; 9:16b; 11:9b; 12:8b; 18:17a; 19:13b, etc. But that would hardly apply in this case, for our passage would hardly come under the list of those 'where the divine name is used instead of the pronoun.' For how could Moses have written: 'Yahweh rained from Himself'? Yet the statement is certainly meant to be emphatic, but not merely emphatic in the sense in which Keil, following Calvin's interpretation, suggests. For both hold that the statement is worded thus to indicate that this was not rain and lightning operating according to the

'wonted course of nature,' but that it might be stated quite emphatically that more than the ordinary causes of nature were at work. We believe that the mere expression, 'God, or Yahweh, rained from heaven,' would have served very adequately to convey such an emphatic statement. But in this instance Yahweh was present in and with His angels, whom He had delegated to this task and who acted under specific divine mandate. He who had the day before been visibly present with them, was now invisibly with them. When his agents acted, He acted. Consequently we believe that the view which the church held on this problem from days of old is still the simplest and the best: 'God the Son brought down the rain from God the Father,' as the Council of Sirmium worded the statement. To devaluate the statement of the text to mean less necessitates a similar process of devaluation of a number of other texts like 1:26, and only by such a process can the claim be supported that there are no indications of the doctrine of the Trinity in Genesis. We believe the combined weight of these passages, including Gen. 1:1, 2, makes the conclusion inevitable that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is in a measure revealed in the Old Testament, and especially in Genesis. Why should not so fundamental a doctrine be made manifest from the beginning? We may see more of this truth than did the Old Testament saints, but the Church has through the ages always held one and the same truth. Luther says: 'This expression indicates two persons in the Godhead.'

Lastly, we quote Lange (CDHCG, 438): "The antithesis which lies in this expression, between the manifestation of Jehovah upon the earth, and the being and providence of Jehovah in heaven is opposed by Keil. [The Hebrew phrase here] is according to Calvin an emphatic repetition. This does not agree with Keil's explanation of the Angel of the Lord. Delitzsch remarks here: There is certainly in all such passages a distinction between the historically revealed, and the concealed, or unrevealed God (comp. Hos. 1:7), and thus a support to the position of the Council of Sirmium: 'the Son of God rains it down from God the Father.' The decisive execution of the judgment proceeds from the manifestation of Jehovah upon the earth, in company with the two angels; but the source of the decree of judgment lies in Jehovah in heaven. The moral stages of the development of the kingdom of God upon the earth, correspond with the providence of the Almighty in the heavens, and from the heavens reaching down into the depths of cosmical nature."

In relation to the foregoing, we add here the following pertinent comments by James Moffat, *The Theology of the Gospels*, 127-128 (Scribners, New York, 1924). Referring to John 12:39-40, Moffat writes: "In Matthew this follows a quotation from Isaiah, which is also cited in the Fourth Gospel, and for much the same purpose, to account for the obduracy of the public, who are no longer the Galileans but the Jews, and also to explain, characteristically, that Isaiah the prophet had a vision of the pre-existent Christ or Logos.

*These things said Isaiah because he saw his glory, and he spoke of him* [Isa. 6:1-11]. The latter conception had been already expressed in the phrase, *Your father Abraham exulted to see my day* [John 8:56]. The Fourth Gospel thus deepens and at the same time reverses the synoptic saying. The prophets and just men of the Old Testament had not simply longed to see the messianic day of Jesus Christ: they had seen it. The pragmatism of the Logos-idea enables the writer of the Fourth Gospel to believe that the saints and prophets of the Old Testament had more than anticipations of the end; their visions and prophecies were due to the pre-existent Christ who even then revealed His glory to their gaze. The *glory of Yahweh* which Isaiah saw in his vision was really the glory of the pre-existent Logos, who became incarnate in Jesus Christ.

"The theology of the Fourth Gospel thus elaborates the truth that the mission of Jesus had been anticipated in the history of Israel. This is the idea of the saying in 8:56, *Your father Abraham exulted to see my day*. It is the conception of Paul (e.g., Gal. 3:16f.), who also traces a messianic significance in Gen. 17:17; and Philo, before him, had explained (*De Mutat. Nominum*, 29-30), commenting on the Genesis passage, that Abraham's laughter was the joy of anticipating a happiness which was already within reach; 'fear is grief before grief, and so hope is joy before joy.' But Philo characteristically avoids any messianic interpretation, such as the Fourth Gospel presents." For Scripture affirmations of the Pre-existence of Christ, see John 1:1-14, 8:58, 1:18; John 17:3-5; 1 Tim. 3:16; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 1:1-4; Col. 1:12-23; 2 Cor. 5:17-20; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:14-18; Rev. 1:12-18, etc.

### Remember Lot's Wife

Luke 17:32—the words of Jesus Himself, a warning which no human being can afford to ignore.

Judging from personal experience both the ignorant and the sophisticated of this world have been inclined to worry themselves about Cain's wife, when as a matter of *practical* import, that is, having to do with the origin, nature and destiny of the person, they should be concerning themselves, and that seriously, about the fate of Lot's wife and what the example of her tragic end means for all mankind. In days gone by, every community harbored one or two old reprobates who liked to pose as "preacher-killers." One of our pioneer preachers was confronted by just such a self-appointed critic on occasion, who said to him, "Preacher, I would probably join church, if I

could find any of you fellows who could answer a question for me." "And what is the question?" asked the evangelist. "If you could just tell me where Cain got his wife, I might give more serious thought to joining church." The evangelist thought for a moment and then replied: "Old man, until you quit thinking about other men's wives, you won't be fit to join church. Besides, there is nothing in Scripture about 'joining' church. You don't 'join' church; you believe, repent, and obey Christ, and He adds you to His church. But you're not ready for that until you repent." The Lord Himself has warned us about the futility of casting pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6). (The key to the problem of Cain's wife is made very clear in Gen. 5:5).

The only woman in the entire Bible whom we are admonished to remember is Lot's wife, and the admonition is from the Lord Himself. From her inglorious end we derive the following truths:

1. The manner in which an entire family can be corrupted by an evil environment.
2. The difficulty of saving a good person from an evil end (1 Pet. 4:18). What manner of woman Lot's wife was we do not know. But this truth surely applies in some measure to Lot and his two daughters.
3. The danger of looking back, when as a matter of fact God can use only those who look to the future (Luke 9:62; Heb. 5:12, 6:1).
4. The possibility of being nearly saved, yet wholly lost (Mark 12:34).
5. The inevitability of divine judgment on the disobedient (Heb. 5:9, 10:26-27; Rom. 2:5-11, Gal. 6:7, etc.).

Our text is directly related by our Lord to the account of His Second Coming. When that occurs, He tells us, it will be the concern of His saints *to escape for their lives*, as Lot and his family were told to do. They are not to look back lest they be tempted *to go back*. They are not to be reluctant to leave an environment marked for de-

struction (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10; 13). Hence Luke 17:33, "Whosoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it."

M. Henry (CWB, 36): "With what a gracious violence Lot was brought out of Sodom, v. 16. It seems he did not make as much haste as the case required. It might have been fatal to him if the angels had not *laid hold of his hand, and brought him forth*, and saved him with fear (Jude 23). The salvation of the most righteous men must be attributed to God's mercy, not to their own merit. We are saved by grace. With what a gracious vehemence he was urged to make the best of his way, when he was *brought forth* (v. 17). He must not hanker after Sodom: *Look not behind thee*. He must not loiter by the way: *Stay not in all the plain*. He must not take up short of the place of refuge appointed him: *Escape to the mountain*. Such as these are the commands given to those who through grace are delivered out of a sinful state. (1) Return not to sin and Satan, for that is looking back to Sodom. (2) Rest not in self and the world, for that is staying in the plain. And (3) Reach towards Christ and heaven, for that is escaping to the mountain, short of which we must not take up."

"Let us, then, seek to pursue a path of holy separation from the world. Let us, while standing outside its entire range, be found cherishing the hope of the Master's return. May its well-watered plains have no charms for our hearts. May its honors, its distinctions, and its riches be all surveyed by us in the light of the coming glory of Christ. May we be enabled, like the holy patriarch Abraham, to get up into the presence of the Lord, and, from that elevated ground, look forth upon the scene of widespread ruin and desolation—to see it all, by faith's anticipative glance, a smoking ruin. *Such will it be*. "The earth also, and the things that are therein, shall be burned up" (NBG, 209). (Cf. Heb. 12:29; 10:27-31).

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON  
PART THIRTY-TWO

1. What was the first proof that Lot's visitors were not just human beings?
2. What activities took place at the gate of these Canaanite cities?
3. What did Yahweh do when the angels went on to Sodom?
4. How account for Lot's sitting in the gate of Sodom?
5. What were the details of Lot's ritual of hospitality?
6. Why probably did Lot suggest delaying the washing of his Guests' feet until the next morning?
7. Why did Lot pressure his visitors not to "abide in the street all night"?
8. Does the Bible indicate that God favors the concentration of population? Cite Scripture evidence to support your answer.
9. How could Lot's presence at the gate have been evidence of his degeneracy?
10. What occurred at Lot's house that night?
11. What does the verb "know" (v. 5) signify?
12. What offer did Lot make to the mob in an attempt to satisfy their demands?
13. What light does this proposal throw on Lot's character? Do you consider that there was any justification for his action? Explain your answer.
14. How was Lot rescued from the mob?
15. List the steps in Lot's progressive degeneracy.
16. What did he do that might be cited in his favor?
17. How does Delitzsch evaluate his actions morally?
18. What is the evidence that Lot had "become familiar with vice"?
19. How can it be said that Lot's action was an attempt to avoid sin by sin?
20. What is the Apostle Peter's testimony concerning Lot?

21. Summarize Whitelaw's analysis of Lot's character.
22. Summarize Speiser's treatment of Lot's character.
23. How does Lot's action point up the influence of an environment?
24. Define homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, pederasty, sodomy.
25. What were the besetting sins of the Cities of the Plain?
26. Explain how homosexuality, pederasty, bestiality, etc., are *unnatural* acts.
27. What does the term "sodomy," generally speaking, include?
28. What are the two functions of the conjugal relation that are thwarted by homosexuality?
29. Explain how any form of sex perversion is an act of utter selfishness.
30. How does the true conjugal union differ from acts of sex perversion?
31. What is the prime fallacy of all so-called "situationist ethics"?
32. Of what is the true conjugal relation scripturally declared to be an allegory?
33. What is the over-all teaching of the Scriptures about sodomy?
34. What attitude did Lot's sons-in-law take in response to his warning? What does their attitude indicate about them and about Lot?
35. How correlate v. 8, v. 12, and v. 14 of chapter 19?
36. Why did Lot linger in Sodom in spite of his visitors' warning?
37. What light does this cast on his character?
38. What did his visitors have to do to get him out of Sodom?
39. In what sense is it said that God was "merciful" to him?
40. What members of Lot's family got out of Sodom?

41. To what small city did God permit Lot to go? What were his excuses for wanting to go there?
42. What was the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah?
43. What are the theories as to the nature of this catastrophe?
44. What is the great moral lesson for man to learn from it?
45. When and why does moral necessity demand penal infliction by Absolute Justice?
46. What are the reasons for rejecting the view that the catastrophe produced the entire Dead Sea as it is known today?
47. What is the traditional theory as to the location of the Cities of the Plain? Why is this theory now generally rejected?
48. What is Kraeling's view of their location, and why?
49. What does Cornfeld have to say about this problem?
50. Explain how the natural and the supernatural could have been combined in producing the catastrophe.
51. What was the fate of Lot's wife? What is the most plausible explanation of what happened to her?
52. What, in all probability, motivated her reluctance to "escape for her life"?
53. What was the sight that greeted Abraham when he looked out on the evidences of the disaster?
54. In what three ways did the catastrophe witness, in subsequent times, to its severity?
55. It is stated that in many instances the Bible speaks more forcefully by what it omits than by what it tells us. Give examples.
56. To what does God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah point forward to, ultimately?
57. In what respects is the story of Lot's wife far superior to all folk tales of the kind?
58. Why the change in the name of the Deity to Elohim, in v. 29.

59. In what sense did God "remember" Abraham?
60. For what probable reasons did Lot and his daughters resort to dwelling in a cave?
61. What should we think of Lot from the fact that he did not even look back to see what was happening?
62. For what reasons may we suppose that Lot's daughters sought to produce seed by their father?
63. Can we charge their act to incestuous passion? Explain?
64. How is incest treated in Scripture?
65. What is always the chief end of penal infliction of any kind?
66. Distinguish between *vindication* and *vengeance*.
67. Where does the history of Lot end, and why does it end where it does?
68. Who were the sons of Lot's daughters by their father? What areas in Palestine did their tribes occupy?
69. What practices of the Moabites and the Ammonites were "abominations" to Jehovah?
70. What does Old Testament history indicate about the subsequent relations between the Israelites on the one hand, and the Moabites and Ammonites on the other?
71. What evidence do we have that certain friendly relations existed between the two groups?
72. What reasons have we for rejecting as absurd the critical notion that this account of the origins of Moab and Ammon, in Genesis, was "a jibe at Israel's foes"?
73. What is the chief importance of the story of the Moabites, *i.e.*, in relation to the Messianic Line and to the Old Testament canon?
74. Summarize the comments of Whitelaw, Leupold, and Moffatt, on Gen. 19:24.
75. Who has commanded us to "remember Lot's wife"? What lessons are we to derive from the story of her tragic end?