

Divine Plagues - Part II

Sodom & Gomorrah

By Rich Jacobs, MD

Sodom and Gomorrah

Sodom and Gomorrah were two of the more prominent cities in the Kikkar of the Levant - a well-watered circular area in Jordan ("Kikkar" - כִּכָּר - from **Genesis 19:17**, is translated as "valley" in the NASB, but it means "circle" or "round"). These Middle Bronze Age cities, arguably, are located at the extreme Southern limits of the Jordan River Valley, at the Northern most border of the Dead Sea. The ruins of Sodom have been hiding in plain sight for millennia in Tall El-Hamman, which only recently began to be excavated. Archeological evidence demonstrates the sudden, cataclysmic destruction of the city. According to Dr. Steven Collins, the chief archeologist who has been excavating Tall El-Hamman, the soil at the Sodom site is "powdery, nasty with burnt things in it. Sometimes you can smell ash still, thousands of years later."



Tel el-Hamman is thought to be Sodom

Amidst the ruins of this leveled bronze age city, "there are skeletal remains that lie as they fell, wrenched and contorted. There's human bone-scatter all through the final-day ash: human beings who blew apart before the fell." Throughout the ruins lies abundant desert glass - evidence of intense heat that caused the sand in the ground to melt! (*Discovering the City of Sodom*, by Steven Collins and Lawrence Scott), Howard Books, 2013). Scientists reach for "non-theological" explanations for these findings and can only think of one plausible cause - a meteor air burst over the city. Nothing else in the region of Tall El-Hamman at the time can explain the findings. The destruction of Sodom was so horrific that the site was not resettled for 700 years, even though its location was prime real estate for an ancient city. The city was avoided like the Plague! The Bible tells the rest of the story.

Abram and Lot had to part ways because of squabbles between their shepherds. Lot chose to move his herds to the fertile plains of the Kikkar around Sodom and Gomorrah (**Genesis 13:10**). He either did not know, or chose to ignore, that "the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord." (**Genesis 13:13**) The narrative reveals the following about the subsequent divine destruction of the cities.

- God announce His decision to judge Sodom and Gomorrah to Abraham (**Genesis 18:16-22; 19:20-22**). The Lord also told Abraham the reason for the plague; ". . . their sin is exceedingly grave." (**Genesis 19:20**).
- The Lord Himself appeared to Abram as three men, speaking as one person, he announced His intention to visit Sodom to evaluate its condition (**Genesis 18:**

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16-22). Thereafter, the Lord sent two angels into Sodom to verify the city's wickedness and rescue righteous Lot from the coming plague (**Genesis 19:1**). Apparently, an outcry regarding the wickedness of the cities reached God (**Genesis 18:20**).

- Sodom's judgment appears to be connected closely in time and events with Abraham receiving his long awaited heir, Isaac, the ancestor of Israel. The Lord reveals His judgment of Sodom to Abraham because he was to "*become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed.*" (**Genesis 18:18**)
- The angels, who appeared as men, were going to spend the night in Lot's home when a group of men from the city sought to sexual relations with them (**Genesis 19:4-9**). The angels rescued Lot from their grasp and struck the men with blindness (**Genesis 19:10-11**). The extreme wickedness of these men is underscored when the Bible says that when they were stuck blind, they wearied themselves to find the door of Lot's house so they could consummate their wicked plans!
- In the morning, after considerable prodding, Lot, his wife, his daughters, and their prospective husbands were allowed to escape to another city, named Zoar, (**Genesis 19:12-23**).
- When Lot and his family arrived safely in Zoar, the Lord rained fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah, along with the other cities in the valley (**Genesis 19:24, 25**). Lot's wife looked back at the cities, though warned not to do so, and was turned into a pillar salt (**Genesis 19:26**). Abraham viewed the valley from a distance and saw thick columns of smoke rising from the distant burning cities (**Genesis 19:27, 28**).

Digging Deeper

1. God sent two angels to verify the outcry He was receiving regarding the wickedness of these cities (**Genesis 19:1**)? From whom was the outcry coming (**Genesis 18:2**)? There are several possibilities.
 - a. The outcry to God could have been from the victims of wickedness in Sodom.
 - b. The outcry to God could have been from righteous Lot who lived in the midst of Sodom's wickedness.
 - c. The outcry to God could have come from godly angelic beings assigned to Sodom and the surrounding cities.
4. Why would an omniscient God require angelic confirmation of the facts about Sodom? Note that the angels were empowered by God to judge Sodom and act accordingly (**Genesis 19:13; 21**).
2. God used fire and "*brimstone*" to destroy the cities (**Genesis 19:24**). The Hebrew word translated as "*brimstone*" is "*gophrit*" (גֹּפְרִית), which refers to "*burning rock*" or "*burning sulphur*". Some modern commentators say this is evidence that Sodom was destroyed by volcanic activity, but the Bible says the fire and brimstone came "*from the Lord out of Heaven*" (**Genesis 19:4**), not out of the earth. Also, there is no

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geologic evidence of volcanic activity in the Jordan River Valley at any time during the Middle Bronze Age. Why did God choose this means to destroy the cities of the Kikkar? Consider the following evidence.

- a. Fire and brimstone is symbolic of the divine **eternal** judgment of wickedness, such as is associated with hell itself (**Job 18:5, 15; Psalm 11:6; Matthew 18:9**).
 - b. Fire and brimstone represent God's judgment of the worldly powers that persecute and threaten God's people (**Isaiah 30:3**). God's end-times judgment of Antichrist and the nations of his empire that oppose Christ's earthly reign will experience destruction by fire and brimstone (**Ezekiel 38**).
 - c. God tells us that He will use fire and brimstone to destroy Edom in the end-times (**Isaiah 34**). This will happen when hostile armies are seeking to destroy the remnant of Israel in Bozrah, in Edom (**Isaiah 63, Revelation 14**). Also, see the lesson on "The Battle of Bozrah". It may not be coincidence that Sodom and the surrounding cities are located in modern Jordan, ancient Edom!
 - d. The end-times Trumpet Plagues of **Revelation**, foreshadow eternal judgment of Antichrist by fire and brimstone (**Revelation 9:18; 14:10; 19:20**).
 - e. Although Satan initially is bound and held in the pit for 1000 years for his crimes during the end-times, his ultimate fate because of his continued rebellion against God is eternal judgment by fire and brimstone (**Revelation 20:10**).
 - f. Eternal torment by fire and brimstone characterizes the judgment of everyone who rejects God and His grace (**Revelation 21:8**).
3. The judgment of Sodom is closely linked with God's revelation to Abraham of his long-awaited son, Isaac, the ancestor of Israel. In fact, God says He is telling Abraham about Sodom because Abraham would become the father of a great nation through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed (**Genesis 18:18**).

Possible Spiritual Significance of the Sodom Plague

1. Sodom's destruction by fire and brimstone may foreshadow the final judgment and destruction of Israel's enemies. For example, Edom is squarely in the cross-hairs of God's final days judgment — they even have an entire book of the Bible devoted to their prophetic condemnation — **Obadiah!** (Also, see **Jeremiah 49:7-22; Isaiah 34:1-17, Ezekiel 35:1-15; Malachi 1:1-4; Zechariah 2:9**). Sodom happens to be located in Edom. Edom plays a significant role in attempting to prevent Israel's divine destiny.
 - a. Edom tried to hinder Israel's passage into their Promised Land. (**Numbers 20:14-21; Ezekiel 25:12-14**)
 - b. Herod the Great, the only antichrist antitype to actually try to kill the Messiah (**Matthew 2:16**), was of Edomite descent. (Note: Herod's father was Antipater, an "Idumean" who converted to Judaism. "Idumean" is Greek for Edomite.)
 - c. Edom will play a significant role in Antichrist's end-time attempts to destroy the remnant of Israel.
 - d. Esau is the ancestor of Edomites, while Jacob is the ancestor of Israel. God openly declares, ". . . *Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.*" (**Romans 9:13**)

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2. Lot's deliverance from Sodom foreshadows the divine deliverance of the righteous from fire and brimstone, final-days judgment. The day of fire and brimstone is closely linked to the day of Israel's deliverance and redemption. It is also closely linked to Israel's ultimate heritage, blessing, and destiny.
 3. Sodom is a warning to Israel and to God's people (**Lamentations 4:6; Ezekiel 16:46-52**)
 4. Lot's deliverance also may foreshadows the rapture of the Church from the world's Great Tribulation before God's Trumpet Judgments come. (**1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Romans 5:9**) These plagues include fire and brimstone (**Revelation 9:18**).
 5. Sodom's destruction foreshadows God's final eternal fire and brimstone judgment of Satan, his angels, and all wickedness. Sodom serves as a warning to Satan and the demons of their future destruction should they continue in their rebellion against God. (**Revelation 14:10; 19:20; 20:10**).
 6. The fire and brimstone judgment of Sodom is God's warning to His creation of the Second Death (**Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8**), which is eternal desolation, infamy, and hopelessness (**Deuteronomy 29:23; Isaiah 1:9; Jeremiah 50:40; Revelation 21:8**).
- ◆ **The fire and brimstone plague destruction of Sodom warns man and angel of God's eternal punishment for wickedness. It instructs us about eternal punishment and ignominious desolation.**
 - ◆ **The Sodom plague foreshadows the Trumpet Judgments and God's end-times destruction of Israel's enemies, with special focus on Edom. Indeed, Jerusalem ("the great city") is also called "Sodom and Egypt" during the end-times reign of Antichrist (Revelation 11:8). The Trumpet Plagues are invoked by God's two witnesses during the last 42 months. Jerusalem is now the "Harlot of Babylon"!**
 - ◆ **The Sodom plague foreshadows the salvation of the Church from God's wrath.**
 - ◆ **The irony of this judgment is that the day of God's fiery destruction of Edom is the day of Israel's ultimate redemption; the day of the fiery demise of Satan's earthly kingdom is the day of Christ's earthly reign begins.**