

Beacons of the Bible

Cities of the Plain

By [Henry Law](#)

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"Then the Lord rained down fire and burning sulfur from the heavens on Sodom and Gomorrah. He utterly destroyed them, along with the other cities and villages of the plain, eliminating all life—people, plants, and animals alike." Genesis 19:24-25

Reader! you are called to a dreadful scene. Turn not away. Face it with open eye. View it solemnly with mind intent on profit. You approach not a drowning world. A blazing plain meets you. The heavens open not to pour down floods of water. Cataracts of flame descend. It was terrible, when unsparing waves destroyed. It is not less terrible, when fiery billows overwhelm.

But there is difference. A world once drowned is drowned no more. But the burning deluge comes again. What has been will be. The fearful picture of the past is fearful presage of the future. Draw near, then, seeking deep instruction. The record is an awakening admonition. Holy Spirit aid! Give edifying grace! Without Your help smiling scenes allure in vain, and terrors scare with unavailing frown.

It was a lovely scene, which charmed Lot's heart. He surveyed the watered plain of Jordan. It super-abounded with all plenteousness. Fertile pastures gave luxuriant food. Enriching streams wound their course through them. Here flocks might largely graze and calmly rest. "It was as the garden of the Lord--like the land of Egypt as you come unto Zoar." Genesis 13:10. It was rich as the richest of all lands. Earth seemed to have no kindlier spot. It smiled as the fair Eden.

Lot was not slow to choose. He took this region as his home. Is his choice wise? He looked to externals only. Outward beauties decided him. He cared not, how the natives lived. He asked not, what will be the influence of the neighboring townsmen? He considered not, that godless companions make fruitful fields no gain. "Those who will be rich fall into temptation and a snare." 1 Tim. 6:9.

It is sad to see Lot settling in this plain. It is sadder far to see him soon moving into Sodom. Sin's course is ever downward. The stream rushes rapidly. It is easy to be entangled in this net. It is difficult to escape.

Abundance brings short peace. Wealth invites spoilers. The sound of war is heard. His home is ransacked. His property is pillaged. He is hurried a captive to a stranger-land. He has no help in his own resources. But Abraham hears of his kinsman's ill. He pursues the foe, and brings deliverance.

Does Lot gain wisdom by calamity? Does he now flee the vile vicinity? How true it is, that no events of sorrow or of joy convert, except where sovereign grace gives blessing. How incessantly should prayer implore the guiding power of the Holy Spirit! Will Lot return to his tent life in the ungodly plains? His conduct is far worse. He is still bent on sojourning within the guilty walls.

But everlasting love still loved him. His name was in the book of life. "For God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn." Romans 11:29. Therefore grace, though dim and feeble, did not utterly expire. Horrid sights meet him at every turn. Frightful sounds incessantly shock his ear. It was pain to him, but pain which he voluntarily sought. "Yes, he was a righteous man who was distressed by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day." 2 Peter 2:8.

At last the cup of Sodom's abominations overflows. Vengeance may tarry long, but it surely falls. God's eye sleeps not. The iniquity of these cities becomes fully ripe. Wrath's sickle will do its work. A fearful night precedes destruction's day. At evening Lot is seated in the gate. Two heavenly visitants approach. Their embassy is wrath. It is the joy of angels to do heaven's behests. To scatter mercies they fly speedily. To sweep with ruin's bosom, they hesitate not. To obey God is their highest honor, whether in works of love or woe.

Lot welcomes them with reverence. He craves their presence as his guests. They yield. They accept his dwelling as their shelter. How blessed to have angels in our homes! This is the Christian's constant privilege.

"The angel of the Lord encamps round about those who fear Him, and delivers them." Ps. 34:7. Unseen inhabitants throng the favored dwelling. If eyes were open, angelic forms in glorious retinue would shine as guards. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Heb. 1:14. Higher, also, is the believer's happy state. His heart is the palace of the Triune Jehovah. Thus Jesus speaks, "If any man loves me, he will keep my words and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." John 14:23. The Spirit testifies, "In whom you also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Eph. 2:22.

We are taught to pray, and therefore to expect, "that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith." Eph. 3:17. It is the voice of our Beloved, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock--if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. 3:20.

In this dreadful night the iniquity of Sodom reaches detestable height. Annals of crime possess no parallel. Paper would almost blush to give recital. The pen shrinks from the record. The guests of Lot exhibit mighty power. They check with blindness the infuriated crowd. They bid Lot to collect his family. "Do you have any other relatives here in the city? Get them out of this place—sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone else. For we will destroy the city completely. The stench of the place has reached the Lord, and he has sent us to destroy it." Genesis 19:12-13.

It is great peril now to leave the house. But compassion excludes fear. Lot seeks the spouses of his daughters. He urgently implores them. "Quick, get out of the city! The Lord is going to destroy it." Genesis 19:14.

Grace braves all peril to save souls. They who realize salvation are untiring to extend the boon. They feel, "yet there is room." They yearn that others should rejoice in their joy, and share the safety, which is their delight. Lot seeks and warns in vain. Thus Noah seemed a fanatic to the wicked of the old world, and Lot is scorned as one that joked. Unbelief always sneers at truth. The faithful cry aloud, 'Flee from the wrath to come'. Derision answers, 'We see no sign of coming judgment. Let preachers preach, and madmen rave, who are we, that we should tremble at unrealistic alarms?'

So the night passed. The morning came. Then the angels hastened Lot, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters which are here, lest you be consumed in the iniquity of the city." Genesis 19:15. Woe to those who tarry recklessly on the accursed ground. If any reader be conscious of reluctance may he seek sovereign grace to slay it! From self against self may mercy rescue! It was so in Lot's case. "While he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful unto him, and they brought him forth and set him without the city." Genesis 19:16.

Lot importunes, that he may rest in Zoar, "Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one; oh! let me escape there, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live." Genesis 19:20.

How gracious is the Lord! how piteous of human weakness! how ready to hear prayer, though intermixed with much alloy! how quick to spare at the cry of intercession! Would that God's children would give him no rest. Then how changed this earth might soon become!

The angel answered, "Very well, I will grant this request too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of. But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it." Genesis 19:21-22

Lot is in Zoar. The eastern sky is bright. Light dawns as in other days. The sun

arises upon earth, and gilds the city's towers--the trees--the meadows of the plain. The busy world is busy in its customary work. Men are going forth to their accustomed toil and pleasure. "They did eat--they drank--they bought--they sold--they planted--they built." Luke 17:28. But it was the last time. Ah! last times must come. Suddenly unusual signs glare in the skies. Heaven is not black with gathering clouds; but lurid with outbreaking fire. The canopy above is as a blazing furnace. Streams descend, not rain or hail, but liquid flame. Lightning succeeds lightning in incessant flashes. Boiling brimstone falls with terrific fury. It seems as if all hell was rushing upon earth. Where can the guilty inhabitants flee? All around them is a blaze. The flame devours each mansion. Shall they rush into the plain? It is as a molten sea. Above--beneath--around--one vast conflagration crackles. A fiery tempest ravages. A fiery deluge overwhelms. There can be no escape. They, whom indomitable lust had long consumed, are now the prey of indomitable flame. Their sin had known no parallel. Now vengeance without parallel destroys.

There is no exemption. The aged and the *young*--the parent and the *child*--the learned and the ignorant--the rich and the poor--the noble and the peasant lie a charred mass. The splendid buildings and the lowly hut--the groves--the vineyards--the corn--the pasture-lands lie a blackened waste. "The next morning Abraham was up early and hurried out to the place where he had stood in the Lord's presence. He looked out across the plain to Sodom and Gomorrah and saw columns of smoke and fumes, as from a furnace, rising from the cities there." Genesis 19:27-28

Reader! Allow a warning word. Deeply ponder this appalling Beacon. The dreadful vengeance is recorded to urge vile sinners from like doom. The gracious Spirit stands pointing to these burning plains. His loving voice sounds loudly, "Escape for your life--look not behind you; neither stay in all the plain--escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed." Genesis 19:17.

Hearken! He cries by Peter's voice, "Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making an example unto those that after should live ungodly." 2 Pet. 2:6.

"An example!" Like vengeance, then, will surely overtake impenitents. The pent-up fire will again break forth. Hearken! He speaks by Jude, "And don't forget the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring towns, which were filled with sexual immorality and every kind of sexual perversion. Those cities were destroyed by fire and are a warning of the eternal fire that will punish all who are evil." Jude 1:7

Again, "an example!" The like course leads surely to like end! The voice will soon be heard, "Depart from me, you cursed ones, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. 25:41.

Let it not be written in vain--"Behold the day comes that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble." Mal. 4:1. The scene is near, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. 1:7, 8.

May the Spirit give us grace to be ready--safe in the only ark of safety--the blessed Jesus. By faith let us flee into His wounded side. By faith let us nestle in His very heart. Then, amid flames of a burning world, we shall be high above the reach of harm. Heavenly Father, bless these warning words!

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