

# The LORD Rained Down Burning Sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah

## 19: 23-29

**DIG:** In the Lord's dealings with Avraham, Lot and Sodom (18:16 to 19:29), what do you learn about His character and purposes? About judgment and mercy for the righteous living a life of compromise? Abraham's plea saved three people, whereas Lot's plea was rejected by his son-in-laws and wife. Why do you think Abraham was able to exercise more influence than Lot on the people he loved? What can you learn about Jesus' Second Coming from this section?

**REFLECT:** When have you hesitated to obey ADONAI because it might make you unpopular? What happened? What examples does Lot give you in trying to lead a godly life in a sinful society? Where has the Lord shown mercy in your life?

By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land (19:23). Right up until the moment of their destruction, the men and women of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord (13:13). They had no idea the fate that awaited them. Then ADONAI rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah from out of the sky (19:24a). Jesus would say later: **The day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all** (Luke 17:30). The LORD (the one made visible to Abraham on the earth) **rained down** judgment from the LORD out of the heavens (19:24b). This verse shows a plurality in the godhead. **Because they do not believe in the trinity, the rabbis teach that the first ADONAI refers to the angel Gabriel and the second ADONAI refers to God. Other rabbis say it is God and His heavenly court.** Both are simple ways of getting around the obvious. Jude tells us that Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire (Jude 7).

Thus He overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities - and also the vegetation in the land (19:25). The physical cities were destroyed, the people in those cities were destroyed and so was all the vegetation. Before the destruction, the plain was well watered, like the garden of Eden (13:10), but it continues to be a desert to this very day. Although only Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned here, the Lord overthrew all the cities but Bela. They were the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah

and Zeboiim (14:8). The Greek term for **overthrew** is *katastrophei*, and is where we get the English word for **catastrophe**. And to show His grace, the city of **Sodom** will be restored in the messianic Kingdom. It will be a saved city, and a moral city (**Ezekiel 16:44-57**).

But Lot's wife looked back (19:26a). In the end, even Lot's own wife was unwilling to be influenced by him. Jesus used her as an example when He said: **On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife (Luke 17:31-32)! Why in heaven's name would Mrs. Lot look back? There are two reasons. First, she loved the comfortable life in Sodom. Her body walked out, but she surely left her heart there. We all have things and people on this earth that we don't want to leave behind. But when the Lord comes back, leave them behind we will. The Bible teaches that whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left (Luke 17:33-35). Secondly, she looked back is simply that she did not believe the LORD. He had said leave the city and don't look back. Lot believed the Lord and didn't look back. But Mrs. Lot didn't believe Him. She was not a believer and didn't make it to safety. She was trapped and overcome by an eruption of molten materials and became a pillar of salt (19:26).**<sup>324</sup> This is a snapshot of those who turn their back on God (see my commentary on Hebrews Ci - If We Deliberately Keep on Sinning, No Sacrifice For Sins is Left).

Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he and the Lord had been talking the previous day. Avraham was obviously in awe of the spectacle before him. This is the only section in Genesis where Abraham appears but says nothing. He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace (19:27-28). Upon seeing the columns of smoke rising from the city, Avraham can only conclude that the loss of life has been total. He had no way of knowing that his nephew and two great-nieces were still alive. Standing there, he believed that nobody had lived through the catastrophe. Of course, the narrator knows about the survivors and therefore we know it.<sup>325</sup>

Now it becomes clear why Lot was spared. He was delivered from this catastrophe because of the faithfulness of Abraham. So when Elohim, the God of creation and destruction, destroyed the cities of the plain, He remembered the blood covenant that ADONAI had made with Avraham (see Eg - I Am the LORD, Who Brought You Out of Ur of the Chaldeans to Give You This Land). Remembered here does not mean that God

forgot and then **He remembered** again. It means *to remember in the sense of taking action on behalf of*. And **He brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived (19:29)**. Thus **Abraham saved his nephew** for the second time; the first time by the sword (**Chapter 14**), and the second time by intercession (**Chapter 18**).

We are amazed at the mercy of **ADONAI**. From the sequence of events in **Lot's** life, it might seem that **he** was not worth saving. **Lot's** weaknesses amounted to wickedness, and yet again and again **the Lord** stayed with **him**, waited for **him**, pleaded with **him**, urged **him** and ultimately did not bring down fire from heaven until **he** was safely out of **Sodom**. Is there anything in this world so wonderful as the mercy that waits for us, follows us, guards our path, and short of making decisions for us, does everything to keep us from ruin?<sup>326</sup>