

“THE INIQUITY OF SODOM”

Ezekiel 16:49

— **Intro:** No one knows exactly where the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were located, but it seems to be generally agreed now among scholars that it was situated to the south of the Dead Sea. And yet while the location is debated, the significance of the name Sodom has come down to the present hour. It is probably true that Sodom stands for the most grievous sins that men have committed. Romans chapter 1, verses 26 and 27, without question have reference to the sin known as Sodomy. Those verses tell us something about the history of Sodom (and of Gomorrah) which have remained as a solemn warning to all cities and nations especially since the book of Romans was written, but quite probably, since God brought the devastating judgment upon Sodom in Abraham’s day.

Going back to verse 21 in Romans 1, and then reading on down to verses 26 and 27, those verses indicate to us that Sodom and Gomorrah had been exposed to the truth of God, but that they rejected what they should have accepted. Instead of glorifying God as the one and only true God, they rejected Him, and turned to idolatry. Instead of worshiping God as their Creator, they worshiped various creatures which God had made, and gave honor to them which they should have given to Him. They treated the truth of God as a lie, and we all know the story of how God destroyed those cities of the plain which evidently did what the people of Sodom had done in rejecting God and becoming idolaters.

They perverted the Word of God, and so God gave them over to the kind of perversion that they have become famous for.

Now please turn to the first chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, and I want us to see again what the prophet Isaiah was directed by the Holy Spirit to say to the people of Jerusalem. In fact, it seems that the whole land of Judah was involved in the condemnation that we find in this opening chapter of Isaiah’s prophecy. (Read Isa. 1:10.) Isaiah was not speaking to Sodom and Gomorrah. They had fallen under the judgment of God long before this. But he was speaking to Jerusalem. In Isaiah’s day Judah had become so corrupted that spiritually they were like Sodom and Gomorrah.

— Approximately 150 years later and we come to Ezekiel’s prophecy, and if we look back to the beginning of Ezekiel 16, we will see that this chapter in which Sodom was mentioned, along with some of her sins, that again, Ezekiel, like Isaiah, was not speaking to Sodom, but about Sodom to

Jerusalem. And you will see that in verse 49 the prophet said that Sodom had not done the sins which were being committed in Jerusalem. In other words, the sins of Jerusalem were worse than the sins of Sodom.

You may remember that our Lord in delivering what we call, The Sermon on the Mount, made the statement, "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness" (Matt. 6:23). No nation in Old Testament times had been exposed to the truth like the nation Israel had, and so no nation was capable of turning away from the truth like Israel was. What happened in Israel was the tragedy of tragedies, and their rejection of the truth was worse than that of any other nation because of the many ways in which God had brought the truth to them.

Now let us go into the Gospels where we find our Lord referring to the city of Sodom again. The passage to which I am referring is found in Matthew 11, beginning with verse 20 and going down through verse 24. Listen as I read Matt. 11:20-24:

20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

So again we see the unique place of responsibility which Jerusalem had because of the truth they had received, and because of the mighty works that had been done in her cities. And Jerusalem is again compared with Sodom.

Now I want to take you to the last book of the Bible where we have the divine account of the last days. And what do we find there? Let me read the first eight verses of Revelation 11.

1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

- 2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.
- 3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.
- 4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.
- 5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.
- 6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.
- 7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.
- 8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified (Rev. 11:1-8).

I find it quite amazing to bring all of these passages of Scripture together as they relate to the city of Jerusalem, which most likely is used as representing the nation of which it is the capitol city.

The first time that Sodom is mentioned in the Bible is in connection with the land occupied by the Canaanites. This is in Gen. 10:19.

The second time is in Genesis 13 when Abraham and Lot parted company, and "Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom." Reading about Lot's decision to head toward Sodom, this is what we read in Gen 13:10-13:

- 10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.
- 11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.
- 12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.
- 13 But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

Lot made a foolish decision. He did not seek the will of God, and so he

moved into a situation that would cause the worst of trouble for him.

In Genesis 14 Lot was delivered by Abraham from the city kings who had captured the city of Sodom, but Lot went right back to the city of his choice.

But the judgment upon Sodom is given to us in Genesis 19, even after Abraham had prayed that the Lord would spare the city if there were even ten righteous people in the city.

Perhaps you remember how the Lord had come with two angels to the tent of Abraham to tell Abraham that they were going to see what was going on in the city. When the angels got to the city, they were immediately in danger from the men of the city. Lot brought them into his home to protect them, but it was determined then that God would judge the city. And, without going into all of the details given to us in Genesis 19, we read these words in Gen. 19:24-26:

- 24 Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah
brimstone and fire from the LORD 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.

The story of Lot is completed at the end of Genesis 19 in a most shameful way. We would have every reason to question Lot's salvation if it were not for what the Apostle Peter tells us in his second epistle, in 2 Peter 2:6-8, reading also of God's judgment upon the angels that sinned, and upon the world in the days of Noah, and then Sodom and Gomorrah:

- 4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them
down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be
reserved unto judgment;
- 5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth
person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the
world of the ungodly;
- 6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes
condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample
unto those that after should live ungodly;
- 7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation
of the wicked:
- 8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing
and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their

unlawful deeds;) (2 Pet. 2:4-8).

Peter said that he was “just Lot,” and then called him “that righteous man.” So we know he was saved, but saved as by fire.

— The influence of Sodom is upon our world today. It is world-wide in its presence. And it is just as abominable to the Lord today as it ever has been. It is and always has been a mark, and a very clear mark, of judgment upon any nation. But now let us go back to our original text in Ezekiel 16:49 to learn what we can from that verse, and the verse which follows. Because it is clear from these verses as well as from Romans 1, that God’s judgment upon the sin of Sodom got started with other familiar sins.

Most of us, I think, are inclined to consider the sin of Sodom as the starting place where the people of Sodom went wrong. But Ezek. 16:49 and 50 indicate otherwise. Here is the sin of Sodom, or Sodom’s iniquities.

Let me begin with this verse by asking the question:

I. WHAT IS AN INIQUITY?

— The word that Ezekiel used here seems to point to the consequences of sin. It indicates that one sin leads to another sin, and that none of them produce the happiness and pleasure that people think they will bring when they do what is displeasing to God.

So where did Sodom’s trouble start, and what followed?

II. SODOM’S INIQUITY (Ezek. 16:49-50).

A. Pride.

Human pride is always involved in sin in one way or another, or even in many ways. Our pride makes us rebel when we are told by someone else to do something. And this was the root sin of the Sodomites. They were exposed to the truth of God, but they did not want it. They wanted to have their own way, to do their own things, as we would say today.

— It is still true, and always will be true that “pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). Pride is when we choose our will and reject God’s will. Pride cause the people of Sodom to deal recklessly with the Word of God, and with God Himself. People reject the

Biblical account of creation because of pride. And this is what people do with all of the Bible. Pride was the root sin of the Devil, and we have those five I will's in Genesis 14 as proof. Man's self-will is pride, and it leads to a downward course. In Mark 7:22 where Mark was quoting what the Lord said about what comes out of the heart of man, he mentioned "pride." It is in all of us. We show pride when we are not aware of what we are doing. The opposite of pride is humility, and the Lord expressed the greatest humility when in the Garden of Gethsemane He said to His Father, "Yet not my will, but thine be done."

Our pride will always lead us astray, so let us beware of the slightest manifestation of it.

B. "Fulness of bread."

Isn't it quite amazing that this would be in the list? Do you remember that the Devil tempted the Lord about bread, about turning stones into bread. And do you remember how the people followed the Lord by the thousands because they ate of His bread, and were filled? It seems that people are most interested in the supply of their physical needs, so much so that it destroys any inclination to hear about spiritual needs.

In our own country, our politicians in Washington were so fearful that they might damage their chances for re-election, and secondly, that they might disturb a flourishing economy, that they refused to do the right thing in connection with the president.

In our country we believe that people will be happy if only their physical needs are met, but nothing is said about their spiritual needs.

When the flood came in Noah's day they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage – and it all had to do with food. There is so much that can be said on this subject. We all need food. We know that. But the Lord was speaking about the excesses to which men go where food becomes the major thing in life.

What comes next?

C. "Abundance of idleness."

Work has always been God's will for people. That was clear from the very beginning, even before sin was committed Adam and Eve had work

to do. Work is one way we are protected from sin. And yet to have as much time to play, seems to be the goal in every generation of human life. We are told to redeem the time because the days are evil.

Then the fourth sin is:

D. Selfishness.

The way Ezekiel expressed his message from God was “neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.”

And then read what is stated in verse 50. What does this seem to tell us? It indicates that the sin for which the city of Sodom is remember was the result of these, and other sins that could have been mentioned. And the word “haughty” indicates that pride has had a hand in all of them.

Concl: Why is it that we need to be concerned about this today? It is because there is a world-wide prevalence of the very sin that brought judgment upon the city of Sodom and the other cities of the plain. And that sin was the result of turning away from the Word of God, dealing with it as though it were a lie, and not the truth. And then they filled their lives with many sins which ultimately led to their judgment.

Jerusalem is called in Scripture “spiritually Sodom and Egypt.” Where do you think our country stands before God? Do we stand in danger of more judgment? Judgment is already here. We feel smug and safe because of our economy, but how do we know that the information that is being given to us is true?

It behooves us as the Lord’s people to take stock of our own lives, to make sure that we are seeking to do God’s will, not our own. To make sure that we are treating God’s Word as the eternal, unchanging Word of the living God. We need to make sure that we are not swept along with the spirit of the age in which we live, but it is still true that all that is in the world, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. I have been quoting, of course, from 1 John 2:15-17.

Again, as I have said before, we need to make sure that we really know the Lord, and then make sure day by day that we are doing God’s will, seeking to please Him, and to bring glory to His Name. The Bible is the best

place to learn about sin, and the consequences of even starting out on the path where we are doing what we want to do, while at the same time ignoring the Word of God. These are days when we need to be listening to the OT prophets and the warnings that they gave, but we also need to be saturating our hearts with the truth of the Word of God. Sin will keep us from the Word, but the Word will keep us from sin. May God give us the grace to go His way, and to do His will. And we find His way clearly pointed out in the Word.