



The Cry of Sodom and Gomorrah

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The Lord Rained Fire and Brimstone from Heaven

With a first reading, it seems unambiguously clear that the Lord directly poured out fire from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah:

Gen 19:24 Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven;

Suddenly and unexpectedly as would be a thunder peal from an unclouded sky, the tempest broke. The Lord rained brimstone and fire out of heaven upon the cities and the fruitful plain; its palaces and temples, costly dwellings, gardens and vineyards, and the gay, pleasure-seeking throngs that only the night before had insulted the messengers of heaven—all were consumed. {PP 162.2}

How easily could the blast of God make that beautiful situation an unsightly place. {CTr 80.3}

However we should follow William Miller's rules of Bible interpretation, which God gave the advent movement to set them on a firm platform:

To understand doctrine, bring all the Scriptures together on the subject you wish to know; then let every word have its proper influence, and if you can form your theory without a contradiction, you cannot be in an error. Rule 4

Those who are engaged in proclaiming the third angel's message are searching the Scriptures upon the same plan that Father Miller adopted. {RH, November 25, 1884 par. 23}

Before we go into the details of the story, let us raise the following question: Are there any cases in the Bible, where it is said that God directly smote someone, yet then it was shown that the smiting did not come directly from Him?

Job 1:9-12 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? (10) Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. (11) But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. (12) **And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power;** only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

Job 1:16 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, **The fire of God is fallen from heaven,** and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

Job 2:3 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, **although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.**

In this case, not only did Job's servant think that fire came directly from God, but God Himself speaks as if He directly had smitten Job. This is because all power ultimately belongs to Him and nothing can happen without His permission.

Psa 62:11 God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.

The Meaning of "Overthrow"

Indeed nothing can happen without God's allowance yet it does not mean that the punishment or the strike comes directly from Him. Let us now look more carefully at what happened in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah:

Deut 29:23 And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the **overthrow** מהפכה [H4114] of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD **overthrew** הפך [H2015] in his anger, and in his wrath.

When Moses describes the destiny of those cities, he uses two verbs which are both translated here as overthrow. While the first one [H4114] tends more to mean destruction, the second means something different:

H2015

הפך

hâphak

haw-vak'

A primitive root; to *turn* about or over; by implication to *{change}* *overturn* *{return}* *pervert*: - X *{become}* *{change}* *{come}* *be* *{converted}* *{give}* *make* [a *{bed}*] *overthrow* (*{-turn}*) *{perverse}* *{retire}* *{tumble}* *turn* (*{again}* *{aside}* *{back}* *to the* *{contrary}* *every way*).

Since this could not be a mere redundant expression on the part of Scripture, the second word throws light upon the method of destruction, which for some reason was connected to some kind of overturning. The most common usage of this word is to *turn*. In the following verse the same word is used to show God turning a curse into a blessing:

Neh 13:2 Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God **turned** [H2015] the curse into a blessing.

The same word is used to describe the conversion of Saul to God.

1 Sam 10:9 And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God **gave** [H2015] him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

The same word is used to describe how the Egyptians were turned against the Israelites.

Psa 105:23-25 Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. (24) And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies. (25) He **turned** [H2015] their heart to hate his people, to deal subtly with his servants.

How did God turn the Egyptians against the Israelites? He sent them Joseph to bless them and through Joseph made them a rich and strong nation.

The king publicly acknowledged that it was through the merciful interposition of the God of Joseph that Egypt enjoyed plenty while other nations were perishing from famine. He saw, too, that Joseph's management had greatly enriched the kingdom, and his gratitude surrounded the family of Jacob with royal favor.

But as time rolled on, the great man to whom Egypt owed so much, and the generation blessed by his labors, passed to the grave. And "there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." Not that he was ignorant of Joseph's services to the nation, but he wished to make no recognition of them, and, so far as possible, to bury them in oblivion. {PP 241.2-3}

The providence of God that was designed to turn the hearts of the Egyptians to the true God resulted in turning them against Him. Rather than feel a debt of gratitude to the God of Heaven, they chose to suspect that Israel would seek to overthrow them and take control of the nation.

The most amazing thing about this Hebrew word for turning is that it is used to describe the work of the fourth angel in the conversion of the nations to the truth.

Isa 60:1-5 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. (2) For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: **but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.** (3) **And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.** (4) Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. (5) Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be **converted** [H2015] unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

We know that in the last days that although many will be converted or turned to the truth, the majority of the world will have their hearts turned against the truth and God's people and they will seek to destroy them.

And at the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth and proclaimed the Sabbath more fully. This enraged the churches and nominal Adventists, [hearts were turned] as they could not refute the Sabbath truth. And at this time God's chosen all saw clearly that we had the truth, **and they came out** [hearts were turned] **and endured the persecution with us.** I saw the sword, famine, pestilence, and great confusion in the land. The wicked thought that we had brought the judgments upon them, and they rose up and took counsel to rid the earth of us, thinking that then the evil would be stayed. {EW 33.2}

The Wrath of God Means to Hide His Face

The text in Deuteronomy 29:23 also says that the Lord did this overturning “in his anger and in his wrath.” Yet the Lord is not like us, His thoughts and His anger are not what we perceive them to be. When the Bible speaks about God’s wrath and His anger, it says this in human terms:

Rom 3:5 But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to **inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)**

If God’s wrath is not a direct infliction on the part of God, then what really happens when those words are used?

Jer. 33:5 They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but it is to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom **I have slain in mine anger and in my fury**, and for all whose wickedness **I have hid my face** from this city.

God’s anger is equivalent to the hiding of His face. This is how the Lord got angry with Admah and Zeboim – two other cities that were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah.

Hosea 11:8 How shall **I give thee up**, Ephraim? how shall I **deliver thee**, Israel? how shall I make thee **as Admah**? how shall I set thee **as Zeboim**? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

The provision of this example shows that the Lord left them to the consequences of their own choice – something very painful for Him as their Father:

Isaiah 3:9 The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! **for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.**

Gal 6:7-8 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (8) For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

The Cross Unlocks the Mystery

The natural man does not believe sin has a self-destructive quality and therefore he thinks God must personally intervene to punish the transgressors. Because they do not believe the wages of sin itself to be death, they think God is the one who has to punish the wicked directly. However Isaiah tells us clearly that the inhabitants of Sodom rewarded evil unto themselves. The question is: How does it happen? How do we unveil the secret of this process where the evils of those 5 cities came back upon them?

The mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries. In the light that streams from Calvary the attributes of God which had filled us with fear and awe appear beautiful and attractive. Mercy, tenderness, and parental love are seen to blend with holiness, justice, and power. While we behold the majesty of His throne, high and lifted up, we see His character in its gracious manifestations, and comprehend, as never before, the significance of that endearing title, "Our Father." {GC 652.1}

The Son of God was not murdered by His Father for our iniquities, but He rather took upon Himself those iniquities and they crushed His soul to death. Yet the natural man "did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." Isaiah 53:4. The experience of suffering our sins caused the Son of God to feel he was forsaken of God – as if the Father had turned or hid His face from Him, whereas God was there and He suffered with His Son.

"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?... God permits His Son to be delivered up for our offenses.

He Himself assumes toward the Sin Bearer the character of a judge, divesting Himself of the endearing qualities of a father. {TM 245.2}

In that thick darkness God's presence was hidden. He makes darkness His pavilion, and conceals His glory from human eyes. God and His holy angels were beside the cross. **The Father was with His Son. Yet His presence was not revealed.** Had His glory flashed forth from the cloud, every human beholder would have been destroyed. And in that dreadful hour Christ was not to be comforted with the Father's presence. He trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him. {DA 753.4}

As the Sin Bearer, Christ does not see His Father's mild countenance anymore, but He rather sees Him as a judge who is divested of the endearing qualities of a father. Sin is the cause for this perception, and only Christ was able to pierce that impenetrable dark cloud to hold on with faith to the invisible reality of His Father's true character. The carnal man does not have such faith, and when God's wrath is manifested in what feels like the turning away of God's face, he is not able to take hold of God's mercy. As Christ is afflicted with all that men are afflicted, Christ experiences the cross in the sufferings and deaths of those who perish in their sins.

Isa 63:9 **In all their affliction he was afflicted,** and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.

Rev 11:8 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.**

The revelation of this mystery of the cross in Sodom and Gomorrah will help us explain the exact process of their destruction. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were not exterminated personally by our Father, but the

concentration of their sins created a whole fiery storm, which could rage only when the Father painfully and reluctantly turns His face from those cities. Notice carefully the process:

In the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, we see that the Lord will interfere; fire came down from heaven and destroyed these wicked cities. From time to time the Lord has made known the manner of His working. **He is mindful of what is passing upon the earth. And when a crisis has come,** He has revealed Himself, and has **interposed to hinder the working out of Satan's plans. He has often permitted matters** with nations, with families, and with individuals to come to a crisis, that His interference might become marked... {TSA 52, 53}

Notice that the Lord is mindful of what is passing upon the earth. He knows exactly how much pressure the earth contains in its recesses as a result of human sinfulness. When Jesus speaks about the punishment upon Sodom and Gomorrah, He does not mention His Father or Himself as its personal instigator:

Luke 17:26-30 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. (27) They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and **the flood came, and destroyed them all.** (28) Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; (29) But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom **it rained fire and brimstone from heaven,** and destroyed them all. (30) Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

The Spirit of prophecy reveals what caused the turmoil of those elements:

Through indulgence in sin, the world is becoming as corrupt **as it was in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah,** and as it was in the

days that were before the flood. Jesus said that this condition of society would be a sign of his coming. He said: “As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.” **The very sins that brought upon Sodom the fire of destruction** are practiced today, and are fast ripening the world for the day of final doom. **Indulgence in intoxicating liquor and in licentious practices**, is common in all our cities and villages, and **the last great day is hastening upon the world.** {RH May 1, 1894, par. 3}

The Sins of Men Affect the Earth

Here it is told us that those particular sins brought destruction upon Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as upon the antediluvian world. We note also that it says the very sins of Sodom brought the fire of destruction; it is not some other element that did it. But how is it such process possible?

Isaiah 24:4-9 **The earth mourneth and fadeth away**, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. (5) **The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof**; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. (6) **Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth**, and they that dwell therein are desolate: **therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned**, and few men left. (7) **The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth**, all the merryhearted do sigh. (8) The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth. (9)

They shall not drink wine with a song; **strong drink** shall be bitter to them that drink it.

This tells us that the earth itself is defiled under its inhabitants when they practice such sins as the use of wine and strong drink. Ellen White applies this defilement of the earth directly to the case of Sodom and Gomorrah.

As we looked upon the desolation of Williamsport, **we thought of the time when the world was deluged by the flood. In our imagination we could behold dimly the scenes of the terrible destruction in the days of Noah. We thought of the burning of wicked Sodom, when the earth was defiled under its inhabitants**, and we remembered that we were living in a time similar to the time preceding the judgments which fell upon the old world. **The Spirit of God is now withdrawing from the people of the earth.** {RH August 13, 1889, par. 8}

The Lord informs us that the earth is also defiled through sexual perversion, which abounded in Sodom and Gomorrah. In the destruction of those two cities we can see the result and consequence of the earth being defiled. We also see the same process of cause and effect in regards to the perversions of the peoples of Canaan.

Lev 18:25-29 And **the land is defiled**: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and **the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants**. (26) Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: (27) (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;) (28) **That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you.** (29) For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off from among their people. The earth itself is saturated

with the iniquities of its inhabitants and it stores their rebellion. The laws that govern the earth, which the Lord had given for good, thus are made into instruments of destruction for the transgressors.

Under the supposed wisdom of men, nature is placed where she becomes a destructive agency. The good things which were given to man only to bless him are converted into a curse. By the use of wine and liquor men become slaves to appetite. God does not interpose and work a miracle to convert evil into good; for He has laid all nature under His eternal laws. Let there be no peace to the wicked, He says. Let everything be at war with him. And nature responds, "There shall be none." If man takes himself in his own hands, to do with himself as he pleases, if he works against God and nature, **his indulgences will become to him the instruments of death.** {3MR 344.2}

Under the hand of God, nature ministers against the transgressors of God's law. **She holds her destructive elements in her bosom till the time when they shall break forth to destroy man and purify the earth.** When Pharaoh defied God through Moses and Aaron, saying, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go" [Exodus 5:2], **nature expressed her sympathy with her injured Maker,** and co-operated with God to avenge the insult to Jehovah. All Egypt was laid desolate because of the stubborn resistance of Pharaoh. {Lt209-1899.23}

God was feeling the defiled earth's vibrations, and this explains why He heard a cry coming from the land of Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities:

Gen 18:20-21 And the Lord said, Because **the cry** of Sodom and Gomorrah **is great, and because their sin is very grievous;** (21) I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether

according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

The vibrations that were coming from the transgressions of Sodom and Gomorrah turned into a great cry. Through the drastically changed vibrations of the earth under those cities, God could feel that something very disturbing was taking place and that those people were about to bring upon themselves their end through their lawlessness, without even suspecting it. The resonance of that cry violently hurt our Father's heart:

It is Satan's work to fill men's hearts with doubt. **He leads them to look upon God as a stern judge.** He tempts them to sin, **and then to regard themselves as too vile to approach their heavenly Father or to excite His pity.** The Lord understands all this. Jesus assures His disciples of God's sympathy for them in their needs and weaknesses. **Not a sigh is breathed, not a pain felt, not a grief pierces the soul, but the throb vibrates to the Father's heart.**
{DA 356.2}

How terrible must have been that cry of Sodom and Gomorrah's corruption and iniquity for our Father's tender heart, since the murder of one righteous man, Abel, that caused the earth to echo, led to this saying by God to Cain:

Gen 4:10-12 And he said, What hast thou done? **the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.** (11) And now art thou **cursed from the earth**, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; (12) When thou tillest the ground, **it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength;** a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

Can we feel the suffering of the Father and His Son in these words? The vibrations caused by one man's iniquity arrived painfully to their hearts, so what storm might the accumulated and concentrated iniquities of a number of cities' population cause? Through the means of the intimate connection

between man and the earth, a storm could be brought about even through several men's restless thoughts and feelings. The disciples of Jesus were disappointed because He did not agree with making Him a king. Here is what happened a little later:

Their thoughts were **stormy** and unreasonable, and the Lord gave them something else to afflict their souls and occupy their minds. **God often does this when men create burdens and troubles for themselves.** The disciples had no need to make trouble. Already danger was fast approaching. **A violent tempest had been stealing upon them,** and they were unprepared for it. {DA 380}

The disciples' stormy thoughts and feelings led to a visible expression in the surrounding nature and the Lord allowed the development of this process to teach them the lesson of trusting in Him. Then what storm might the iniquities of thousands of citizens from those corrupted cities cause, when God finally ceased from restraining the natural consequences of their sin?

Again the solemn command was given to hasten, **for the fiery storm would be delayed but little longer.** {PP 161.2}

The storm of divine judgment was only waiting that these poor fugitives might make their escape. {PP 160.2}

This was happening because through His Spirit, Christ, who is the Word of God holding the elements, was completely crucified through the sins of those people, and there was nothing more that could hinder the might of that chaos created by them. Finally Christ would allow the fire of their mocking and corrupted passions to be manifested through the elements of nature:

It was an immense company, youth and aged men alike **inflamed by the vilest passions.** {PP 159}

But his words were like **oil upon the flames.** Their rage became like **the roaring of a tempest.** {PP 159.2}

2 Peter 3:3-7 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days **scoffers**, walking after their own **lusts**, (4) And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. (5) For this they willingly are ignorant of, that **by the word of God** the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: (6) **Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:** (7) But the heavens and the earth, which are now, **by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire** against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

The following archaeological information might give us more of a clue on how those cities were destroyed by their own iniquities and not directly from the Lord.

The Bible provides a detailed description of the calamity that befell the Cities of the Plain. In that description are two Hebrew phrases and a Hebrew word that must be examined in order to understand the event: *goprit wa es*, the material that fell on the cities (Gn 19:24), *hapak*, what happened to the cities (Gn 19:25), and *kqitor hakkibsan*, what Abraham observed (Gn 19:28). The word *goprit* is a foreign loan word, most likely derived from Akkadian *ki/ubritu*, which means sulfurous oil (black sulfur) (Gentry 1999). The word accompanying *goprit, wa es*, simply means “and fire.” In other words, the material that fell on Sodom and Gomorrah and the Cities of the Plain (except Zoar) was a burning petroleum product. The term *hapak* means to overturn, or overthrow. When Abraham looked down upon the scene of devastation, he observed smoke rising from the land of the plain, *keqitor hakkibsan*, “like smoke from a furnace.” *A kibsan* is a pottery kiln (Wood 1992). Air passing through a pottery kiln does so by means of a forced draft resulting from the heating of the air. The smoke exiting from a kiln

is forced out of the exit flue and pushed upward into the air. That is what Abraham observed—smoke from the land of the plain being forced upwards. The word used for smoke, *qitor*, is not the word used for smoke from an ordinary fire. Rather, it is a thick smoke, the smoke that comes from sacrifices. It is clear that something unnatural or extraordinary is recorded here.

<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2008/04/The-Discovery-of-the-Sin-Cities-of-Sodom-and-Gomorrah.aspx>

This explains why Amos and Peter said the Lord overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

Amos 4:11 I have **overthrown** some of you, as God **overthrew** Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

2 Peter 2:6 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;

The overthrow took place as the Son of God could no longer groan in travail under the burden that was inflicted upon the creation by the Sodomites.

Rom 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

What happened to Sodom was not done by force nor by the hand of anyone.

Lam 4:6 For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, **that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.**

The Two Angels Sent to Destroy the City

The earth itself was broken down by the tar that was bursting out of it. But how can we understand what the angels said to Lot?

Gen 19:13 For **we will destroy this place**, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and **the Lord hath sent us to destroy it**.

The angels revealed to Lot the object of their mission: “We will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it.” {PP 159.3}

Here the angels left them, and turned back to Sodom to accomplish their work of destruction. {PP 160.2}

Lot went into Sodom rich; he left with nothing, **led by an angel’s hand, while messengers of wrath waited to pour forth the fiery blast which was to consume all the inhabitants of Sodom** and blot out the entrancing beauty of that highly favored city and its suburbs, making bleak and bare and uninteresting a place which God had once made very beautiful. {10MR 236.1}

Before we trace the whole story in regard to the two angels’ behavior, let us remember the following explanation from the Spirit of Prophecy in respect to how a soul is destroyed:

All should be intelligent in regard to the agency by which the soul is destroyed. It is not because of any decree that God has sent out against man. He does not make man spiritually blind. God gives sufficient light and evidence to enable man to distinguish truth from error. But He does not force man to receive truth. He leaves him free to choose the good or to choose the evil. **If man resists evidence that is sufficient to guide his judgment in the**

right direction, and chooses evil once, he will do this more readily the second time. The third time he will still more eagerly withdraw himself from God and choose to stand on the side of Satan. And in this course he will continue until he is confirmed in evil and believes the lie he has cherished as truth. His resistance has produced its harvest. By his example he leads others to follow the same course of resistance against God. {Ms126-1901.26}

This text indicates that the soul's destruction always comes as a result of the rejection of timely light. The light the Lord was giving to the inhabitants of Sodom by Lot was to a great degree eclipsed by his compromising and adaptation to those people's culture. For instance, in his attempt to save his guests, he was ready to sacrifice his daughters by giving them to those wicked men. This is perhaps one of the reasons why Lot was not able to fully trust the Lord:

But Lot, confused and terrified, pleaded that he could not do as he was required lest some evil should overtake him and he should die. Living in that wicked city, in the midst of unbelief, his faith had grown dim. The Prince of heaven was by his side, yet he pleaded for his own life as though God, who had manifested such care and love for him, would not still preserve him. {PP 161.1}

The angels had to finish the work which Lot was not able to do in a more complete presentation of God's righteousness, holiness and love that exposes sin. This testimony would act as fire for their souls, and if they repented in the face of this revelation of God's glory, the judgment upon those cities would have been canceled.

They [the two angels] seemed to decline his hospitality, saying, "Nay; but we will abide in the street." **Their object in this answer was twofold**—to test the sincerity of Lot and also to appear ignorant of the character of the men of Sodom, as if they supposed

it safe to remain in the street at night. **Their answer made Lot the more determined not to leave them to the mercy of the rabble.** He pressed his invitation until they yielded, and accompanied him to his house. {PP 158.3}

In the twilight two strangers drew near to the city gate. They were apparently travelers coming in to tarry for the night. None could discern in those humble wayfarers the mighty heralds of divine judgment, and little dreamed the gay, careless multitude that **in their treatment of these heavenly messengers that very night they would reach the climax of the guilt which doomed their proud city.** But there was one man who manifested kindly attention toward the strangers and invited them to his home. Lot did not know their true character, but politeness and hospitality were habitual with him; they were a part of his religion—lessons that he had learned from the example of Abraham. Had he not cultivated a spirit of courtesy, he might have been left to perish with the rest of Sodom. **Many a household, in closing its doors against a stranger, has shut out [shut door] God’s messenger, who would have brought blessing and hope and peace.** {PP 158.1}

“They [the two angels] 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.” **Had they not been visited with double blindness, being given up to hardness of heart, the stroke of God upon them would have caused them to fear, and to desist from their evil work.** {PP 159.2}

We notice that because the angels came into the city of Sodom in the form of men, the men of Sodom revealed the perversity of their evil hearts in seeking to have sexual relations with them. The blindness that came upon these men was a warning to repent and cease what they were doing. Their refusal to repent led these men to the climax of their guilt and this is what doomed that city. No hand was laid upon the city, the defilement of the city itself destroyed them.

When the children of God manifest mercy, kindness, and love toward all men, and especially toward those of the household of faith, they bear testimony to the fact that “the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” It is because the law of God is trampled under foot, transgressed, and made void, that **the world is becoming like Sodom, and like the world before the flood. In the midst of an apostate world, there must be those who represent loyalty to the law of God.** A desperate confederacy will be formed among those who are breaking the law of God, and who are teaching others to transgress its precepts. They will make decrees to oppose God’s commandment-keeping people. **“And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day; and shall consume the glory of his forest; and of his fruitful field, both soul and body;** and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth. {RH August 20, 1895, par. 1}

Here Ellen White quotes from the tenth chapter of Isaiah where it is shown that the light of Israel and the Holy One, who is obviously God, turns into a consuming fire for those who hate their holy and loving characters. This fire of our Father’s love consumes both soul and body, which means that it is the revelation of His character of love that causes tremendous pain for the souls of those who choose to adhere to their sins forever.

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. He is “alienated from the life of God.” Christ says, “All they that hate Me love death.” Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. **By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who**

unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them. {DA 764.1}

The angels knew that their merciful invitation towards the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah would turn [Strong's H2015] and completely harden them and thus lead to their destruction, yet in this last critical moment they had to give them the last chance to repent before they pass the boundary where they would have lost the ability for that. The Lord was waiting in anguish for them until the last chance for repentance faded away:

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that **any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**

This means that when Sodom and Gomorrah were about to be destroyed, there was no one who could come to repentance. This condition Ellen White calls "the shut door" and as we will see, she applies it both to the antediluvians and to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Concerning the former she clearly states:

They are filled with remorse, but not repentance, filled with hatred and some with sorrow, as convictions bring the sermons of Noah vividly to their minds. {Ms17-1885.9}

The passages above show that not the angels but the inhabitants of Sodom decided to perceive the angel's sweet savour as the savour of death:

2 Cor 2:14-16 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest **the savour of his knowledge** by us in every place. (15) For we are unto God **a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:** (16) **To the one we are the savour of death unto death;** and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

The Shut Door

This is how the time of probation ended for them, because they themselves closed the door for God's mercy through their refusal to repent:

On the night prior to their destruction the cities of the plain rioted in pleasure. Lot was derided for his fears and warnings. But it was these scoffers that perished in the flames. That very night **the door of mercy was forever closed to the wicked**, careless inhabitants of Sodom. {5T 233.3}

And why was the door of mercy closed? Because the inhabitants of Sodom were unmerciful, and as they had judged others they likewise judged themselves beyond the ability to receive mercy.

Rom 1:31-32 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, **unmerciful**: (32) Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

James 2:13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

That last night was marked by no greater sins than many others before it; **but mercy, so long slighted, had at last ceased its pleading** [they cannot see it anymore as reflected in the blindness]. The inhabitants of Sodom had passed the limits of divine forbearance—"the hidden boundary between God's patience and His wrath [when man fully hardens himself]." The fires of His vengeance were about to be kindled in the vale of Siddim. {PP 159.2}

God is not the one who closes the door; for He waits until the last human being which is able to repent hardens himself forever. Man, through his rejection to God's appeals to repent, pushes the door of mercy shut. The experience with

the shut door has its application during the time of the Early Advent Movement, where those who rejected the message of mercy (Three angels messages proclaimed by the Adventists) placed themselves where they could not benefit from God's grace that came from the Most Holy Place. Yet this experience will be repeated at the end of time.

There was a **shut door** in Noah's time. **There was a shut door to the unbelievers in the destruction of Sodom, but an open door to Lot.** There was a shut door to the inhabitants of Tyrus, a shut door to the inhabitants of Jerusalem **to those who disbelieved**, but **an open door to the humble, the believing, those who obeyed God.** **Thus it will be at the end of time. Those that are ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.** {Ms17-1885.10}

It shows us how we should understand the filling of information in the books of heaven during the time of the investigative judgment – through their own choice in regard to the messages sent from heaven, they determine their fate; God is not the One who does it. A little earlier in the same article the Spirit of prophecy reveals exactly what closed the door for those people living before the flood and those who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah:

The long forbearance of God had ceased, **the figures in the books of God's reckoning had been accumulating**, the cup of the unjust was full. Mercy then ceased, and justice took the sword of vengeance. The door shut, hope for the world dead; **the last warning rejected, the golden opportunity past, forever past...** {Ms17-1885.8}

They were the ones who did not hear the voice of mercy because God could not have sent them any more light that could help them. This process in Sodom and Gomorrah is set as an example in regards to how the judgements will come after the thousand years.

Jude 1:7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are **set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.**

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah symbolizes to us how this world will be destroyed by fire. {CTr 80.2}

The Final Destruction of the Wicked

Since the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is an example as to how the world will be destroyed by fire, then we can know for sure that the fire which comes from heaven after the thousand years comes as the result of what will be ejected by the earth itself and possibly by the sky itself as referenced in 2nd Peter 3:7 – the consequence of accumulated iniquity by billions of wicked people who refuse to repent even when the door is open to them on the part of God. The gates of the New Jerusalem will be open even up to the point where that vast army rushes towards the city.

At last the order to advance is given, and the countless host moves on—an army such as was never summoned by earthly conquerors, such as the combined forces of all ages since war began on earth could never equal. Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for this final struggle. Kings and warriors are in his train, and the multitudes follow in vast companies, each under its appointed leader. With military precision the serried ranks advance over the earth's broken and uneven surface to the City of God. **By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed**, and the armies of Satan surround the city and make ready for the onset. {GC 664.3}

This open gate shows that the Father's heart is always open to His children and that only they are the ones who close it through their unrepentant state. Christ's command to shut the gate is simply a mirror of their decision to reject mercy.

As the wicked approach the city, Christ is glorified and the light that radiates from Him flows upon all in the city and all on the earth.

Now Christ again appears to the view of His enemies. Far above the city, upon a foundation of burnished gold, is a throne, high and lifted up. Upon this throne sits the Son of God, and around Him are the subjects of His kingdom. The power and majesty of Christ no language can describe, no pen portray. The glory of the Eternal Father is enshrouding His Son. **The brightness of His presence fills the City of God, and flows out beyond the gates, flooding the whole earth with its radiance.** {GC 665.1}

The same glorious light that fills the city pours out over the wicked outside of the city. The cross that they have despised is revealed in all its glory.

Above the throne is revealed the cross; and like a panoramic view appear the scenes of Adam's temptation and fall, and the successive steps in the great plan of redemption. The Saviour's lowly birth; His early life of simplicity and obedience; His baptism in Jordan; the fast and temptation in the wilderness; His public ministry, unfolding to men heaven's most precious blessings; the days crowded with deeds of love and mercy, the nights of prayer and watching in the solitude of the mountains; the plottings of envy, hate, and malice which repaid His benefits; the awful, mysterious agony in Gethsemane beneath the crushing weight of the sins of the whole world; His betrayal into the hands of the murderous mob; the fearful events of that night of horror--the unresisting prisoner, forsaken by His best-loved disciples, rudely hurried through the streets of Jerusalem; the Son of God exultingly displayed before Annas, arraigned in the high priest's palace, in the judgment hall of Pilate, before the cowardly and cruel Herod, mocked, insulted, tortured, and condemned to die--all are vividly portrayed. {GC 666.3}

Both the righteous and the wicked are moved or turned by the scenes of the cross of Christ.

The awful spectacle appears just as it was. Satan, his angels, and his subjects have no power to turn from the picture of their own work. Each actor recalls the part which he performed. Herod, who slew the innocent children of Bethlehem that he might destroy the King of Israel; the base Herodias, upon whose guilty soul rests the blood of John the Baptist; the weak, timeserving Pilate; the mocking soldiers; the priests and rulers and the maddened throng who cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children!"--all behold the enormity of their guilt. They vainly seek to hide from the divine majesty of His countenance, outshining the glory of the sun, while the redeemed cast their crowns at the Saviour's feet, exclaiming: "He died for me!" {GC 667.2}

As the wicked have rejected the belief that God is merciful and they have aligned themselves with Satan and his demand that every sin must be punished, their judgement against themselves is mirrored back to them through the law of God.

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner. {DA 761.4}

The whole wicked world stand arraigned at the bar of God on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven. They have none to plead their cause; they are without excuse; and the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them. {GC 668.2}

The sentence given by God is only a reflection of their own thoughts.

It is now evident to all that the wages of sin is not noble independence and eternal life, but slavery, ruin, and death. **The wicked see what they have forfeited by their life of rebellion.** The far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory was despised when offered them; but how desirable it now appears. “All this,” cries the lost soul, “I might have had; but I chose to put these things far from me. Oh, strange infatuation! I have exchanged peace, happiness, and honor for wretchedness, infamy, and despair.” All see that their exclusion from heaven is just. **By their lives they have declared: “We will not have this Man [Jesus] to reign over us.”** {GC 668.3}

Like the men who stood before Christ when writing in the sand, the wicked are convicted by their own judgment as worthy of death.

John 8:9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last:

John 5:22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

John 8:15 Ye judge after the flesh; I [Christ] judge no man.

As the wicked have rejected the Saviour, they must now experience their own form of crucifixion and be crushed by their own guilt.

Those who reject the mercy so freely proffered, will yet be made to know the worth of that which they have despised. **They will feel the agony which Christ endured upon the cross to purchase redemption for all who would receive it.** And they will then realize what they have lost—eternal life and the immortal inheritance. {RH Sept. 4, 1883}

So we see that as Christ was crucified in Jerusalem, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah died in their own guilt and thus Christ suffered with them and was crucified in Sodom as stated in Rev 11:8. As Sodom is an example of eternal fire, sadly Christ will suffer the agony of crucifixion in the death of the wicked. As David cried over his lost son Absalom in the midst of victory, so the Son of David will be in sorrow for the lost. This is a day of great sadness and when this day has ended then God will wipe away all tears for the former things will have passed away.

In regard to the experience of the wicked, they are filled with rage and seek to lay the blame for the calamity upon Satan.

Notwithstanding Satan has been constrained to acknowledge God's justice, and to bow to the supremacy of Christ, his character remains unchanged. The spirit of rebellion, like a mighty torrent, again bursts forth. Filled with frenzy, he determines not to yield the great controversy. The time has come for a last desperate struggle against the King of Heaven. He rushes into the midst of his subjects, and endeavors to inspire them with his own fury, and arouse them to instant battle. But of all the countless millions whom he has allured into rebellion, there are none now to acknowledge his supremacy. His power is at an end. The wicked are filled with the same hatred of God that inspires Satan; but they see that their case is hopeless, that they cannot prevail against Jehovah. **Their rage is kindled against Satan and those who have been his agents in deception. With the fury of demons they turn upon them, and there follows a scene of universal strife.** {4SP 487.1}

This is the final shut door experience for the world and the vibrational cry of that rejection will be manifested in the earth. Who can estimate the charge of their enormous iniquity upon the earth and the atmosphere above? It is the rage of the wicked that kindles the fire and brings universal strife.

Rev 20:9 And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, ESV

Fire comes down from God out of heaven. The earth is broken up. The weapons concealed in its depths are drawn forth. Devouring flames burst from every yawning chasm. The very rocks are on fire. The day has come that shall burn as an oven. The elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein are burned up. Malachi 4:1; 2 Peter 3:10. {GC 672.2}

The fire that bursts forth from every yawning chasm is the echoing vibration of the fiery indignation that burns in the hearts of the lost.

Eze 28:18 Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; **therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee,** it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

Then it will be clear for everyone, even for Satan himself and the wicked, that God's judgments are righteous and good because they will know for sure that the Ruler of the Universe allows but only the consequence of their own choice to come to fruition and does not directly intervene by striking them to the ground.

We read of chains of darkness for the transgressor of God's law. We read of the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that is not quenched. Thus is represented the experience of every one who

has permitted himself to be grafted into the stock of Satan, who has cherished sinful attributes. **When it is too late, he will see that sin is the transgression of God's law. He will realize that because of transgression, his soul is cut off from God,** and that God's wrath abides on him. [The turning of God's face as the sinner perceives it] **This is a fire unquenchable, and by it every unrepentant sinner will be destroyed.** Satan strives constantly to lead men into sin, and he who is willing to be led, who refuses to forsake his sins, and despises forgiveness and grace, **will suffer the result of his course.** {ST April 14, 1898, par. 13}

Riches, power, genius, eloquence, pride, perverted reason, and passion are enlisted as Satan's agents in doing his work in making the broad road attractive, strewing it with tempting flowers. But every word they have spoken against the world's Redeemer **will be reflected back upon them, and will one day burn into their guilty souls like molten lead.** They will be overwhelmed with terror and shame as they behold the exalted One coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. **Then shall the bold defier, who lifted himself up against the Son of God, see himself in the true blackness of his character. The sight of the inexpressible glory of the Son of God will be intensely painful to those whose characters are stained with sin. The pure light and glory emanating from Christ will awaken remorse, shame, and terror.**" {*Confrontation* 87.1}

And so the Great Controversy is ended and sin and sinners are no more. Yet we see that in all this that God and His Son did no violence.

The Context for the Destruction of Sodom

Returning to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah we see that the angels that were sent to overthrow the city did so by a revelation of God's character of love, appealing to the men of Sodom to turn from their wickedness. Like Pharaoh

who hardened his heart to the appeals of God through Moses and Aaron to let Israel go, the people of Sodom resisted the last message of mercy to them and the door was shut by these cities. This is the means by which “the Lord will interfere”:

In the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, we see that the Lord will interfere; fire came down from heaven and destroyed these wicked cities. From time to time the Lord has made known the manner of His working. **He is mindful of what is passing upon the earth. And when a crisis has come,** He has revealed Himself, and has **interposed to hinder the working out of Satan’s plans. He has often permitted matters** with nations, with families, and with individuals to come to a crisis, that His interference might become marked... {TSA 52, 53}

God will interfere to try to save us and turn us from the self-destructive consequences of our own deeds and thoughts. He doesn’t “interfere” by killing us, for He need not do that – our own carnal nature inevitably leads us to ruin, it needs no active interference from God. Yet because of our fallen nature, we read such statements above as God interfering through sending fire, when the passage clearly states he interferes, or interposes, to “hinder the working out of Satan’s plans.” He interferes to save us, and the closer we come to our destruction, the more dramatically he will try to interpose to save us. But God will respect our decision in regards to the destiny of our own soul, though it break His heart, torture His Son, and cause His creation to “groaneth and travaileth in pain”. Rom 8:22.

The firmness of the decision by the men of these wicked cities caused a cry to go up from Sodom that vibrated into the atmosphere and this cursed cry burned up the cities so that few men were left, namely Lot and his daughters.

The apostle Paul outlines the sequence:

Rom 1:26-32 For this cause **God gave them up** unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: (27) And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned **in their lust** one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. (28) And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, **God gave them over** to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; (29) Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, (30) Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, (31) Without understanding, **covenantbreakers**, without natural affection, implacable, **unmerciful**: (32) Who knowing [perceiving] the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

There is a connection between Romans 1:26-32 and Isaiah 24:5-6.

Isa 24:5-6 The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. (6) Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.

Those who transgress the laws through murder, envy, covetousness, disobedience to parents and more, and are also breaking the everlasting covenant, are the ones that defile the earth so that the inhabitants of the earth are burned. These people are unmerciful to others because they do not expect to receive mercy from God, and thus they shut the door to all invitations of mercy.

It is because of the atmosphere that surrounds every man that the air was charged with the poisonous influences of fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit and all the other items in the list above. This is why God finally allowed these cities to receive the consequences of their own actions by allowing the earth itself to vomit them out of the land (Lev 18:25).

The influence of every man's thoughts and actions surrounds him like an invisible atmosphere, which is unconsciously breathed in by all who come in contact with him. **This atmosphere is frequently charged with poisonous influences**, and when these are inhaled, moral degeneracy is the sure result. {5T 111.1}

The angels sent to that city were not sent to personally destroy the city themselves, but the reaction of the inhabitants of Sodom to those angels shut the door of mercy in their own faces because they did not believe in mercy.

Angels are sent from the heavenly courts, not to destroy, but to watch over and guard imperiled souls, **to save the lost**, to bring the straying ones back to the fold. {RH May 10, 1906}

These angels went to save the lost inhabitants of Sodom and tried to move upon the hearts of the straying ones and bring them back to the fold. Instead they hardened their hearts and thus through the work of the angels who intended to save them, the inhabitants of these cities were destroyed – even as Pharaoh destroyed Egypt by resisting the appeals of Moses to let Israel go.

So in the light of this study we have a choice to make. Either we choose to project the blame back to our Father as the direct executioner of those cities, or we receive the greatest lesson that we can learn from the judgment that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah, which is to understand that our thoughts, our words and our deeds are the seeds that will produce the sure harvest manifested in nature itself. Therefore let us ask and fill ourselves with the meek and gentle

Spirit of Christ which will forever be at peace with the whole creation of the universe.

The Cry of Sodom and Gomorrah

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is one of the key Bible stories used by people to show how God destroys those who persistently refuse to submit to Him. The fire that comes from Heaven is understood to be God Himself pouring forth a fury of fire to end the lives of those miserable sinners that were a burden to themselves and a wicked influence in the world.

But what is the meaning of the words of Revelation in regard to Sodom?

Rev 11:8 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.

How was Christ crucified in Sodom? Was it not the wicked men of Sodom who were destroyed in Sodom? Is it possible that many of us have fallen into the trap of thinking that Christ was smitten of God and afflicted in Sodom when it was Christ who was spiritually crucified there?

“And they also which pierced Him.” These words apply not only to the men who pierced Christ when He hung on the cross of Calvary, but to those who by evil-speaking and wrong-doing are piercing Him today. Daily He suffers the agonies of the crucifixion. Daily men and women are piercing Him by dishonoring Him, by refusing to do His will. {ST, January 28, 1903 par. 8}

This story is important because it sets forth the example of what will happen at the end of the 1000 years for Sodom suffered the vengeance of eternal fire. (Jude 1:7)