

Home Page

Sodom

The Watchtower Reprints, July 1879, p. 7

“Christ’s own words shall tell us that they *are not as guilty* in His sight as the Jews, who had more knowledge: ‘Woe unto thee, Capernaum, for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom it would have remained unto this day.’ Thus Christ’s own words teach us that they had not had their full opportunity.

‘Remember,’ Christ says of the Sodomites, that ‘God rained down fire and *destroyed them all.*’ So, if their restoration is spoken of, it *implies* their resurrection.”

The Divine Plan of the Ages (SS-1) 1916 ed., p. 110

“And why should not the Sodomites have an opportunity to reach perfection and everlasting life as well as Israel, or as any of us?...Our Lord’s own words tell us that although God rained down fire from heaven and destroyed them all because of their wickedness, yet the Sodomites were not so great sinners in his sight as were the Jews, who had more knowledge. (Gen. 19:24; Luke 17:29.)...Thus our Lord teaches that the Sodomites did not have a full opportunity; and he guarantees them such opportunity when he adds (verse 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’ ...And if Capernaum and all Israel are to be remembered and blessed under the ‘New Covenant,’ sealed by the blood of Jesus, why should not the Sodomites also be blessed among ‘*all* the families of the earth?’ They assuredly will be.”

(continued)

The Watchtower, June 1, 1952, p. 336

“Corroborating this is Jude 7, which states that these cities are ‘placed before us as a warning example by undergoing the judicial punishment of everlasting fire.’ (NW) ‘Everlasting fire’ symbolizes the same thing as Gehenna, namely, second death. The destruction upon Sodom and Gomorrah must be final, or Jude would not have used it to illustrate the fate of those defilers for whom ‘the blackness of darkness stands reserved forever’. (Jude 13, NW) Jude 7 shows that those ancient cities had their judgment day back there at the time of their destruction, since they are spoken of as having already undergone an execution of judgment, ‘the judicial punishment of everlasting fire.’ By no wresting of scripture can this be made to mean a future resurrection for slain of the Lord. No remnant was saved from those cities,...If those slain by the Lord at Sodom have no resurrection, then those slain by him at Armageddon will have none, for the former pictures the latter.”

The Watchtower, June 1, 1952, p. 338

“Another judgment period is brought into view when those championing resurrection for exterminated Sodomites quote Jesus’ words on a certain occasion...From this some argue that there is a future judgment, in the millennial reign, for both Sodom and these Jewish cities. If we take this expression to mean that, then it would contradict Jude’s statement that Sodom had already undergone the ‘judicial punishment of everlasting fire.’”

(continued)

The Watchtower, August 1, 1965, p. 479

“Since Jude 7 shows that Sodom and Gomorrah became a ‘warning example by undergoing judicial punishment of everlasting fire,’ does that not bar the inhabitants of those cities from a resurrection? - A.C., USA. Reading only that verse, without our taking into consideration what the rest of the Bible has to say on the matter, one might draw such a conclusion. But other scriptures present additional facts that cannot be ignored if we are going to arrive at a sound conclusion...For it to be ‘more endurable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah’ than for others, it would be necessary for former inhabitants of that land to be present on Judgment Day...So apparently individuals who used to live in that land will be resurrected.--Rev. 20:12,13.”

You Can Live Forever In Paradise On Earth, 1982, First ed., p. 179

“By saying this, Jesus showed that at least some of the unrighteous people of ancient Sodom and Gomorrah will be present on earth during Judgment Day.”

Insight on the Scriptures, V. 2, 1988 ed., p. 985

“Sodom and Gomorrah were everlastingly destroyed as *cities*, but this would not preclude a resurrection for *people* of those cities.”

Revelation Its Grand Climax at Hand!, 1988 ed., p. 273

“Jude 7 states that those Sodomites underwent ‘the judicial punishment of everlasting fire,’ meaning eternal destruction. (Matthew 25:41,46)”

(continued)

The Watchtower, June 1, 1988, p. 31

“In this light, Jude 7 would mean that the wicked people of Sodom/Gomorrah were judged and destroyed everlastingly...It is apparent, then, that those whom God executed in those past judgments experienced irreversible destruction.”

**You Can Live Forever In Paradise On Earth,
1989 ed., p. 179**

“Will such terribly wicked persons be resurrected during Judgment Day? The scriptures indicate that apparently they will not ... Yes, for their excessive immorality the people of Sodom and of the surrounding cities suffered a destruction from which they will apparently never be resurrected. -- 2 Peter 2:406, 9, 10a.”

(done)

Once more we read: "Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man." How, Lord? we ask, if he tasted death for the one hundred and forty-three billions, and from other causes it becomes efficacious only to one billion, is not his death comparatively a failure?

Again: "Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to *all people*." Surely it is to but a little flock to whom it has been glad tidings, and not to *all people*.

Another is: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." A ransom, then why should not *all* have some benefit from Christ's death?

Oh, how dark, how inconsistent do these statements appear when we remember that the Gospel Church is "a little flock." Oh, how we wish it would please God to open our eyes that we might understand the Scriptures, for we feel sure that did we but understand, it must all seem clear, it must all declare in thunder tone, "God is Love." Oh, that we had the key! Do you want it?—Are you sure you do? It is the last text we quoted, "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified *in due time*." Due time. Ah, now we see. God has a due time for everything. He could have testified it to this one hundred and forty-two billions in their life time. Then that would have been their due time; as it was not so, their due time must be future. We know that now is our due time, because it is testified to us now. Christ was a ransom for you before you were born, but it was not due time for you to hear it until years after. So with the Hottentot; Christ was his ransom and at the same time was yours; he has not heard it yet, and may not in this life; but in God's *due time* he will.

But does not death end probation? one inquires. There is no scripture which says so, we answer, and all the above and many more scriptures would be meaningless or worse,

IF DEATH ENDS ALL

to the ignorant masses of the world. The only scripture ever quoted to prove this generally entertained view, is, "As the tree falleth, so it lies." If this has *any* relation to man and his future, it indicates that in whatever condition of knowledge or ignorance he enters death, he remains the same until he is raised up again.

But can knowledge ever reach these billions in their graves while dead? No; God has provided for the resurrection of them all. For "as in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive." As death came by the first Adam, so life comes by the second Adam. Everything that mankind lost in the first, is to be restored in the second. Hence, the age following Christ's second coming is spoken of as "the times of restitution."

Life is one of the things lost, and is to be one of the things restored. Mark me! I do not say eternal life is given them. No; Adam never had eternal life to lose; if he had it, he could not have died. He had natural life, lost natural life, and it is to be natural life that the second Adam restores. This is a certain sort of *salvation* that Christ accomplishes for all, but the *eternal* salvation, which believers receive, is entirely different. This enables us to use another text, which is little used except by Universalists, and although not Universalists, yet we claim the right to use all Scripture. It reads: "We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them which believe." All men are saved or rescued from the loss entailed on them through Adam, by having all those lost things, including natural life, restored to them. He is also the "especial Saviour of them which believe." For believers who now constitute the body of Christ are the happy recipients of the gift of God, *eternal* life. While those of the *world* are raised *natural* bodies, those of the *Church* are raised *spiritual* bodies, "neither can they die any more, but are like the angels of God."

Now we see that "the testimony in *due time*" explains all of those troublous texts. In due time it shall be "glad tidings of great joy to all people." In due time that "True Light shall lighten every man that cometh into the world," and in no other way can these scriptures be used without wresting. We take them to mean just what they say. Paul carries out the line of argument with emphasis in Rom. v. 18, 19. He reasons that as all men were condemned to death and suffered it because of Adam's transgression, so also Christ's righteousness justifies *all* to life again. All lost life, not of our own will or choice, in the first Adam; all receive life at the hands of the second Adam, equally without their will or choice.

When thus brought to life, and the love of God testified to them, their probation,

THEIR FIRST CHANCE.

begins, for we do not preach a *second chance* for any.

But Peter tells us, that "the restitution is spoken of by the

mouth of all the holy prophets." They do all teach it. Ezekiel tells us of the valley of dry bones, "This is the whole house of Israel;" and God says to them, "I will bring you up out of your graves, and bring you into your own land." This agrees with St. Paul, Rom. vi. 25, 26. Blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles (the Gospel Church, the elect company "taken out of the Gentiles") be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved, or brought back from their cast-off condition. For "God hath not cast off His people whom He foreknew." They were cut off from His favor while the *bride of Christ* was being selected, but will return to favor when that work is accomplished.—Vs. 28 to 33. The prophets are full of statements of how God will "plant them again, and they shall be no more plucked up." This does not refer to restorations from former captivities in Babylon, Syria, &c., for the Lord says, "In that day it shall no more be a proverb among you 'the fathers ate a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge;' but every man shall die for his own sin." This is not the case now. You do not die for your own sin, but for Adam's—"As in Adam all die." He ate the sour grape, and our forefathers continued to eat them, entailing further sickness and misery upon us. The day in which "every man shall die for his own sin," is this Millennial or Restitution day. But when restored to the same conditions as Adam, will they not be as liable to sin and fall again as he was? No; they will be liable, but not *as liable*; they have learned in their time the lesson which God designed to teach to all, viz., "The exceeding sinfulness of sin." They will be prepared to appreciate the good and shun the evil, and the Gospel Church then glorified will be, "the kings (rulers) and priests" (teachers) of that new age, for "Unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the word (age) to come, whereof we speak," &c. Then through "the second Adam" and His helpmeet they may be begotten into their spiritual likeness.

But are we sure that God intends these blessings for any but the "people whom He foreknew" (the Jews)? Yes. He mentions other nations also by name, and speaks of their restitution. Let me give you an illustration that will be forcible:

THE SODOMITES.

Surely if we find their restitution mentioned you will be satisfied. But why should they not have an opportunity to obtain eternal life as well as you or the Jew? They were not wicked in the proper sense, for they did not have law or much knowledge. True, they were not righteous, but neither were you when God gave you your opportunity. Christ's own words shall tell us that they are not as guilty in His sight as the Jews, who had more knowledge: "Woe unto thee, Capernaum, for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom it would have remained unto this day." Thus Christ's own words teach us that they had not had their full opportunity. "Remember," Christ says of the Sodomites, that "God rained down fire and destroyed them all." So, if their restoration is spoken of, it *implies* their resurrection.

Let us look at the prophecy, Ezek. xvi. 48 to the close. Read it carefully. God here speaks of Israel and compares her with her neighbor, Samaria, and also with the *Sodomites*, whom He says, "I took away as I saw good." Why did God see good to take away these people without giving them a chance of eternal life through the knowledge of "the only name?" Because it was not their *due time*. They will come to a knowledge of the truth when *restored*. He'll save them from death's bondage first, and then give them knowledge. As it is written: "God will have *all men* to be saved, and to come to a *knowledge of the truth*." When brought to the knowledge, then, and not until then, are they on trial for *eternal* life. With this thought, and with no other, can we understand the dealings of the God of love with those Amalekites and other nations, whom He not only permitted, but commanded Israel to butcher. "Slay Amalek utterly—leave neither man, woman or child." "Spare not the little ones." How often my heart has ached, and yours, too, as we sought to reconcile this apparent wantonness on God's part with the teachings of the new dispensation. "God is love," "Love your enemies," &c. Now we can see that the entire Jewish age was a type of the higher, Gospel age; Israel's victories and conquests merely pictures of the Christian's battles with sin, etc. These Amalekites and Sodomites and others were used to illustrate, or to be "examples" "for our admonition;" and these people might just as well die so, as of disease and plague, and it mattered little to them as they were merely learning to know *evil*, that when on trial, "in *due time*," they might learn *good* and be able to discriminate and choose life.

But let us read the prophecy further. After comparing Israel with Sodom and Samaria, and pronouncing her worse, v. 53 says: "When I bring again the captivity [in death, all

tution of the Sodomites clearly taught, we may feel satisfied of the truth of this glorious doctrine of Restitution for all mankind, spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets. And why should not the Sodomites have an opportunity to reach perfection and everlasting life as well as Israel, or as any of us? True, they were not righteous, but neither was Israel, nor were we who now hear the gospel. "There is none righteous; no, not one," aside from the imputed righteousness of Christ, who died for all. Our Lord's own words tell us that although God rained down fire from heaven and destroyed them all because of their wickedness, yet the Sodomites were not so great sinners in his sight as were the Jews, who had more knowledge. (Gen. 19: 24; Luke 17: 29.) Unto the Jews of Capernaum he said, "If the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."—Matt. 11: 23.

Thus our Lord teaches that the Sodomites did not have a full opportunity; and he guarantees them such opportunity when he adds (verse 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." The character of the Day of Judgment and its work will be shown in succeeding pages. Here we merely call attention to the fact that it will be a *tolerable* time for Capernaum, and yet *more tolerable* for Sodom; because, though neither had yet had full knowledge, nor all the blessings designed to come through the 'Seed,' yet Capernaum had sinned against more light.

And if Capernaum and all Israel are to be remembered and blessed under the "New Covenant," sealed by the blood of Jesus, why should not the Sodomites also be blessed among "all the families of the earth?" They assuredly will be. And let it be remembered that since God "rained down fire from heaven and destroyed them all" many cen-

tures before Jesus' day, when their restoration is spoken of, it implies their awakening, their coming from the tomb.

Let us now examine the prophecy of Ezekiel 16: 48-63. Read it carefully. God here speaks of Israel, and compares her with her neighbor, Samaria, and also with the Sodomites, of whom he says, "I took them away as I saw good." Neither Jesus nor the Prophet offers any explanation of the seeming inequality of God's dealings in destroying Sodom and permitting others more guilty than Sodom to go unpunished. That will all be made clear when, in "due time," his great designs are made manifest. The Prophet simply states that God "saw good" to do so, and Jesus adds that it will be more tolerable for them in the day of judgment than for others more guilty. But upon the supposition that death ends all probation, and that thereafter none may have opportunity to come to a knowledge of the truth and to obey it, we may well inquire, Why did God see good to take away these people without giving them a chance of salvation through the knowledge of the only name whereby they can be saved? The answer is, because it was not yet their *due time*. In "due time" they will be awakened from death and brought to a knowledge of the truth, and thus blessed together with all the families of the earth, by the promised "Seed." They will then be on trial for everlasting life.

With this thought, and with no other, can we understand the dealings of the God of love with those Amalekites and other nations whom he not only permitted but commanded Israel to destroy, saying, "Go, smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." (1 Sam. 15: 3.) This apparently reckless destruction of life seems irreconcilable with the character of love attributed to God, and with the teaching of Jesus, "Love your enemies," etc., until we come to recognize the

om and Gomorrah are eternally "cut off". Corroborating this is Jude 7, which states that these cities are "placed before us as a warning example by undergoing the judicial punishment of everlasting fire". (NW) "Everlasting fire" symbolizes the same thing as Gehenna, namely, second death. The destruction upon Sodom and Gomorrah must be final, or Jude would not have used it to illustrate the fate of those defilers for whom "the blackness of darkness stands reserved forever". (Jude 13, NW) Jude 7 shows that those an-



cient cities had their judgment day back there at the time of their destruction, since they are spoken of as having already undergone an execution of judgment, "the judicial punishment of everlasting fire." By no wresting of scripture can this be made to mean a future resurrection for slain of the Lord. No remnant was saved from those cities, Lot and his daughters being sojourners, not natives.—Rom. 9:29, NW.

* If those slain by the Lord at Sodom have no resurrection, then those slain by him at Armageddon will have none, for the former pictures the latter. So in their endeavor to prove their contention that not all slain at Armageddon will remain dead, some seek to show that the Sodomites destroyed by fire will return in a resurrection. They quote Ezekiel 16:53-55: "When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them: that thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in

that thou art a comfort unto them. When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate."

¹⁰ The context shows that restoration after captivity, not resurrection in the millennium, is being discussed. In a miniature fulfillment came the restoration of Judah and Jerusalem after 70 years of desolation (607-537 B.C.), when Jews and Nethinim and other foreigners returned to inhabit

the land. The greater restoration started in Jesus' day and continues now. When Jesus came the Jews were in captivity to the Devil's organization, Babylon the great. Captives of Rome politically, captives of sin, captives of false religion. But when Jesus came, preached, died, was resurrected, appeared in heaven with his sacrificial merit, provided the basis for redemption, poured out the holy spirit upon a faithful Jewish remnant who sought redemption in his name, illuminated their minds to freedom-giving truths and released them from bondage to antitypical Babylon, then they were restored to the theocratic organization of Jehovah God. For three and a half years after Pentecost the freeing message was confined to the Jews, and a remnant was restored. All this was in fulfillment of Ezekiel 16:53-55, where it speaks of the restoration of Jerusalem and her daughters.

¹¹ When persecution grew intense and believing Jewish Christians were scattered, they went everywhere preaching. The evangelist Philip went to Samaria, where

9. Why and how do some try to show Sodom's destruction not final?

10. What fulfills Ezekiel's prophecy about the restoration of Jerusalem and her daughters?

11. When were "Samaria and her daughters" restored?

discussing restoration of the theocratic organization, not resurrection.

JUDGMENT UPON ISRAEL IN JESUS' DAY

¹⁵ Another judgment period is brought into view when those championing resurrection for exterminated Sodomites quote Jesus' words on a certain occasion. He had reproached the unrepentant Jewish cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida, which had witnessed many of his powerful works, then said: "And you, Capernaum, will you perhaps be exalted to heaven? Down to Hades you will come; because if the powerful works that took place in you had taken place in Sodom, it would have remained until this very day. Consequently I say to you people, It will be more endurable for the land of Sodom on Judgment Day than for you." (Matt. 10:14, 15; 11:20-24; Luke 10:10-15, NW) From this some argue that there is a future judgment, in the millennial reign, for both Sodom and these Jewish cities.

¹⁶ If we take this expression to mean that, then it would contradict Jude's statement that Sodom had already undergone the "judicial punishment of everlasting fire". Actually, Jesus was using a form of speech construction common in Biblical times. He used a similar construction when he said: "It is easier, in fact, for a camel to get through the eye of a sewing needle than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of God." (Luke 18:25, NW) No sane person would believe a camel could squeeze through a needle's eye. Yet if this obviously impossible thing were said to be easier than something else, would that not powerfully emphasize the utter impossibility of the other thing? So Jesus forcefully made the point that rich ones loath to part with their wealth would not enter the kingdom.

15. Why do some argue for a future judgment for both Sodom and the Jews of Jesus' day?

16. What did Jesus mean when he said judgment would be more endurable for Sodom than certain Jewish cities?

Similarly, Sodom did not endure its judgment day, had failed completely, and the Jews knew its fate was sealed. Their opinion of Sodom was the lowest possible. So when Jesus told them that it would be more endurable for utterly depraved Sodom than for these Jewish cities they got the powerful point.

¹⁷ These Jewish cities had heard the warning and had seen powerful works; they had had their fair judgment trial and by their decision showed they were worthy of eternal destruction. (Matt. 10:5-15; Luke 10:8-12; John 12:37, NW) By witnessing miraculous cures performed by the power of the holy spirit and yet refusing to accept the message, the inhabitants of these cities were sinning against the holy spirit, which is the unforgivable sin meriting second death. They ranged themselves alongside the Pharisees who saw Jesus heal a demon-possessed man, but refused to accept this manifest operation of the holy spirit. Because of this Jesus told them they would never have forgiveness, neither in the present system of things nor in the next, the new world. Being judged adversely, unforgivable in both the old world and the new world, it would be useless to resurrect them in the millennium. Jesus pronounced judgment against them: "Serpents, offspring of vipers, how are you to flee from the judgment of Gehenna?" If the blind religious leaders were to land there, so were their blind Jewish followers. And when the false religious leaders converted some heathen they did not bring him into the true worship that would cleanse him of his past sins against God, but merely added to his past sins the religious sinfulness and hypocrisy which they taught him, doubling his burden of guilt. Thus the proselyte became twice as much a "subject for Gehenna" as the scribes and

17. Why would it be useless to resurrect the Jewish clergy, their Jewish followers, and their Gentile converts?



● Since Jude 7 shows that Sodom and Gomorrah became a "warning example by undergoing the judicial punishment of everlasting fire," does that not bar the inhabitants of those cities from a resurrection?—A.C., U.S.A.

Reading only that verse, without our taking into consideration what the rest of the Bible has to say on the matter, one might draw such a conclusion. But other scriptures present additional facts that cannot be ignored if we are going to arrive at a sound conclusion.

For example, at Matthew 11:23 it is written: "If the powerful works that took place in [Capernaum] had taken place in Sodom, it would have remained until this very day." Obviously, this does not mean that the same individuals who were living in Sodom at the time of its destruction would have remained alive for over 1900 years down to the time when Jesus spoke those words, but that the city would have remained as an inhabited place.

Then the next verse refers to the Judgment Day, saying: "Consequently I say to you people, It will be more endurable for the land of Sodom on Judgment Day than for you." (Matt. 11:24) Similarly, at Matthew 10:15 are recorded Jesus' words: "Truly I say to you, It will be more endurable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than for that city" where the people would reject the message carried by Jesus' disciples. For it to be "more endurable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah" than for others, it would be necessary for former inhabitants of that land to be present on Judgment Day. It is not the literal land, the ground, that is to be judged. Revelation chapter 20 shows that it will be persons raised from the dead who will stand "before the throne." Nor will judgment be passed on them as groups, as former inhabitants of certain lands, but they will be "judged individually according to their deeds" during the time of judgment. So apparently individuals who used to live in that land will be resurrected.—Rev. 20:12, 13.

What is it, then, that underwent "the judicial punishment of everlasting fire"? While the inhabitants of the cities were certainly de-

stroyed, apparently it was not the people but *the cities themselves* that were everlastingly destroyed. They have not been rebuilt down to this day. Notably, J. Penrose Harland wrote: "It has been shown that Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim were doubtless situated in the area now covered by the waters of the southern part of the Dead Sea."—*The Biblical Archaeologist Reader* (1961), page 59; see also Isaiah 13:19, 20.

What happened to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah at the time that Jehovah rained fire and sulphur on them from heaven stands as a warning to all to avoid immoral conduct such as was carried on in those cities.

● On what animal did Jesus Christ make his triumphal ride into Jerusalem? Matthew 21:7 mentions both an ass and a colt.—M.E., U.S.A.

Jesus said to the disciples he sent into Jerusalem: "You will at once find an ass tied, and a colt with her." (Matt. 21:2) So there was a mother or she-ass and a colt that was yet with its mother. Then at Matthew 21:7 we read: "They brought the ass and its colt, and they put upon these their outer garments, and he seated himself upon them."

We will be aided to understand which animal Jesus actually used if we first read the prophecy that Jesus was thus fulfilling. Translated directly from Hebrew, Zechariah 9:9 reads: "Be very joyful, O daughter of Zion. Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem. Look! Your king himself comes to you. He is righteous, yes, saved; humble, and riding upon an ass, even upon a full-grown animal the son of a she-ass." Thus, the Messiah would use a "full-grown" male animal, "the son of a she-ass."

The accounts in Mark, Luke and John mention only that one animal, the one Jesus rode. They refer to it both as an "ass" and as a "colt." Obviously, that animal could be identified satisfactorily by either term. (Mark 11:2-7; Luke 19:30-35; John 12:14, 15) Interestingly, both Mark and Luke show that the "colt" was one "on which none of mankind [had] yet sat." While it was a mature male animal, it had not yet been separated from its mother and used as a mount. So the disciples brought both the she-ass and its colt to Jesus, but the one he rode was the male ass, the colt.

We are informed that the disciples "put upon these their outer garments, and [Jesus] seated himself upon them." Thus Jesus seated himself, not on both the she-ass and its colt, but on the outer garments placed on the colt. Then Christ rode into Jerusalem.

did not listen. They rejected Jesus as the Messiah, even after hearing his preaching and seeing him perform miracles. When sending out his disciples to preach, Jesus said of a city that would reject their message: "Truly I say to you, it will be more endurable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than for that city."—Matthew 10:15.

⁹ By saying this, Jesus showed that at least some of the unrighteous people of ancient Sodom and Gomorrah will be present on earth during Judgment Day. Although they had been very immoral, we can expect that some of them will be resurrected. (Genesis 19:1-26) Jehovah in his mercy will bring them back so that they will have an opportunity to learn about his purposes. But Jesus' words also show that some of the unrighteous ones to whom he and his disciples personally preached will be present during Judgment Day. They, too, will be resurrected and be given further opportunity to learn God's purposes. For whom will it be more difficult to accept Christ as king at that time? For the people of ancient Sodom or for those who had rejected the preaching of Jesus and his disciples?

¹⁰ It will be more difficult for those who personally rejected Jesus. Speaking of Capernaum, one of the cities where he performed miracles, Jesus said: "If the powerful works that took place in you had taken place in Sodom, it would have remained until this very day. Consequently I say to you people, It will be more endurable for the land of Sodom on Judgment Day than for you." (Matthew 11:22-24) Yes, during Judgment Day it will be even more difficult for those from Capernaum to admit their mistakes and to accept and serve Christ as king than it will be for the people of ancient Sodom to learn righteousness.

¹¹ So it will be easier for certain "unrighteous" resurrected ones to learn about God and serve him than it will be for certain other "unrighteous" ones. (Matthew 12:41, 42) What, then, about the "righteous" who are resurrected—persons such as Abraham,

9, 10. (a) What unrighteous people will be resurrected during Judgment Day?
(b) Why will it be more difficult for some unrighteous ones than for other unrighteous ones?

11. Why will it be easier on Judgment Day for the "righteous" than for any of the "unrighteous"?

following year, Chedorlaomer and his allies defeated Bera, the king of Sodom, and his confederates. Besides seizing possessions and foodstuffs, the victors took Lot and others captive.—Ge 14:1-12.

Abraham's forces overtook Chedorlaomer and recovered the captives and booty, including Lot and his household. The king of Sodom insisted that Abraham keep the recovered material goods, but Abraham refused, lest Bera should say, "It was I who made Abram rich."—Ge 14:13-24.

Everlasting Destruction. Sodom, however, persisted in a course in defiance of Jehovah, becoming known for such immoral practices as homosexuality. "The cry of complaint about Sodom and Gomorrah," Jehovah declared, "yes, it is loud, and their sin, yes, it is very heavy." God therefore sent his angels to destroy Sodom, with the assurance to Abraham that if ten righteous persons could be found in the place, the whole city would be spared.—Ge 18:16, 20-33.

The city showed it deserved destruction, for a vile mob of residents of Sodom, including boys and old men, surrounded Lot's house, attempting to rape his angelic guests. The next day, after Lot, along with his wife and two daughters, left the city, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by sulfur and fire. (Ge 19:1-29; Lu 17:28, 29) Thereafter Sodom and Gomorrah became a proverbial figure of utter destruction from God Almighty (De 29:23; Isa 1:9; 13:19; Jer 49:18; 50:40; La 4:6; Am 4:11; Zep 2:9; Ro 9:29) and of extreme wickedness.—De 32:32; Isa 1:10; 3:9; Jer 23:14; Eze 16:46-56; see GOMORRAH.

Jude mentions that "Sodom and Gomorrah . . . are placed before us as a warning example by undergoing the judicial punishment of everlasting fire." This would not conflict with Jesus' statement about a Jewish city that would reject the good news: "It will be more enduring for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than for that city." Sodom and Gomorrah were everlastingly destroyed as cities, but this would not preclude a resurrection for people of those cities.—Jude 7; Mt 10:15; compare Lu 11:32; 2Pe 2:6.

"In a Spiritual Sense." Revelation 11:3, 8 says that the corpses of God's "two witnesses" lay in the broad way of the great city 'called in a spiritual sense Sodom and Egypt.' Isaiah's prophecy (1:8-10) likens Zion or Jerusalem to Sodom and calls her rulers "dictators of Sodom." However, about 96 C.E. when John was given the Revelation vision of events to occur in the future, the typical city of Jerusalem had been destroyed long before, in 70 C.E. The reference therefore

must be to a "great city" or organization, an antitypical Jerusalem, pictured by unfaithful Jerusalem of old.

SOLDIER. A person who serves in an army. In the Hebrew Scriptures military personnel are often precisely designated according to the specific function they served: cavalrymen (Ex 14:9), runners (1Sa 22:17), slingers (2Ki 3:25), men handling the lance and shield (2Ch 25:5), shooters (2Ch 35:23), archers (Job 16:13), or bowmen (Isa 21:17). The Greek word for "soldier" is *stra-ti-o'tes*.—See ARMY.

During the time of Roman domination of Judea, soldiers were a common sight there. The fact that an army officer at Capernaum could say: "For I . . . [have] soldiers under me," indicates that soldiers were stationed there under his command. (Mt 8:5-9) Roman troops were stationed in the Tower of Antonia in Jerusalem, serving as a point of control over the Jews. The military commander there when Paul made his last visit to Jerusalem rescued him from a mob, and again the next day from the rioting Pharisees and Sadducees. (Ac 21:30-35; 22:23, 24; 23:10) When a plot against Paul's life was revealed, the commander supplied an escort of 70 horsemen, 200 soldiers, and 200 spearmen to take Paul as far as Antipatris, the horsemen going on with him from there to Caesarea.—Ac 23:12-33.

Jewish Soldiers. There were also Jewish soldiers, among them being those who approached John the Baptizer with the question, "What shall we do?" These were possibly engaged in a type of police inspection, especially in connection with the customs or collection of the tax.—Lu 3:12-14.

Jesus' Execution and Burial. Roman soldiers were used in the execution of Jesus, inasmuch as he was turned over to the Roman governor, charged with sedition against Rome. These soldiers submitted him to great indignities, mocking him, spitting upon him, and striking him before leading him off for impaling. (Mt 27:27-36; Joh 18:3, 12; 19:32-34) They divided his outer garments among themselves and cast lots for his inner garment. Four soldiers were evidently employed in the detachment that impaled Jesus. (Joh 19:23, 24) The army officer having oversight of the execution, observing the phenomena that occurred and the circumstances under which Jesus died, said: "Certainly this man was God's Son." (Mr 15:33-39) Roman soldiers were also placed as guards at Jesus' tomb. (Mt 27:62-66) If these guards had been Jewish temple police, the Jews would not have had to ask Pilate about the matter. Likewise, the chief priests promised to set

“goes on ascending forever and ever.” When a literal city is burned by conquering armies, the smoke keeps ascending as long as the ashes are hot. Anyone who tries to rebuild it while it is still smoking will simply get burned by the smoldering ruins. Since the smoke from Babylon the Great will rise “forever and ever” in token of the finality of her judgment, no one will ever be able to restore that iniquitous city. False religion is gone forever. Hallelujah, indeed!—Compare Isaiah 34:5, 9, 10.

⁵ In an earlier vision, John saw around the throne four living creatures, together with the 24 elders that picture the Kingdom heirs in their glorious heavenly position. (Revelation 4:8-11) Now he sees them again as they thunder forth a third Hallelujah over the destruction of Babylon the Great: **“And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures**

5. (a) What do the 24 elders and the four living creatures do and say? (b) Why is the Hallelujah refrain far more melodious than Hallelujah choruses sung in Christendom’s churches?

“Epistle to Sodom and Gomorrah”

Under this feature heading, London’s *Daily Telegraph* of November 12, 1987, reported on a motion before the General Synod of the Church of England. This called for ousting homosexual “Christians” from the church. Columnist Godfrey Barker stated: “The Archbishop of Canterbury gloomily opined yesterday: ‘If St Paul were to write an epistle to the Church of England, we might well ask what sort of letter it might be.’” Mr. Barker himself commented: “An epistle to Sodom and Gomorrah is the answer,” and added: “Dr Runcie [the archbishop] fancied it would read like Romans, Ch 1.”

The writer quoted Paul’s words at Romans 1:26-32: “God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurities. . . . Men committing shameless acts with men . . . though they know God’s decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practise them.” He concluded: “St Paul was merely worried about the chaps in the pews. Dr Runcie’s problem is the chaps in the pulpits.”

Why does the archbishop have such a problem? Large headlines in the London *Daily Mail* of October 22, 1987, had declared: “‘One vicar in three gay’ . . . Campaign to drive out homosexuals ‘would shut Church of England.’” The reports quoted the “reverend” general secretary of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement as saying: “If this motion were accepted it would wreck the Church, and the Archbishop of Canterbury knows it. As a general figure, we believe between 30 and 40 per cent of Church of England clergymen are gay. And they are the most active people contributing to the ministry of the Church.” The dwindling numbers of churchgoers is no doubt in part a reflection of disgust at that burgeoning homosexual ministry.

What did the church synod decide? An overwhelming majority of 388 members (95 percent of the clergy) voted in favor of a watered-down motion. Concerning this, *The Economist* of November 14, 1987, reported: “The Church of England is against homosexual practices, but not very much. The general synod, the Church’s parliament, with homosexual clergy in mind, this week decided that homosexual acts, unlike fornication and adultery, are not a sin: they merely ‘fall short of the ideal’ that ‘sexual intercourse is an act of total commitment which belongs properly within a permanent married relationship.’” Contrasting the stance of the Archbishop of Canterbury with the apostle Paul’s forthright statement at Romans 1:26, 27, *The Economist* displayed a quotation of Paul’s words above the caption “St Paul knew what he thought.”

Jesus Christ also knew what he thought and stated it in explicit terms. He said that it would be “more endurable for the land of Sodom on Judgment Day” than for the religionists who spurned his message. (Matthew 11:23, 24) Jesus was here using hyperbole to show that those religious leaders who rejected the Son of God and his teaching were even more reprehensible than the Sodomites. Jude 7 states that those Sodomites underwent “the judicial punishment of everlasting fire,” meaning eternal destruction. (Matthew 25:41, 46) How severe, then, will be the judgment of so-called Christian leaders who blindly lead their blinded flocks away from the high moral standards of God’s Kingdom into the permissive, debauched ways of this world! (Matthew 15:14) Concerning false religion, Babylon the Great, the voice from heaven calls with urgency: “Get out of her, my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues.”—Revelation 18:2, 4.

spoken of (1) Israelites destroyed for lack of faith, and (2) angels who sinned and are 'reserved with eternal bonds for the judgment of the great day.' Then Jude wrote: "So too Sodom and Gomorrah . . . are placed before us as a warning example by undergoing the judicial punishment of everlasting fire." This text has been applied to the actual cities' being destroyed everlastingly, not the people. However, in view of Jude 5 and 6, likely most people would take verse 7 to mean a judicial punishment of individuals. (Similarly, Matthew 11:20-24 would be understood as criticizing people, not stones or buildings.) In this light, Jude 7 would mean that the wicked people of Sodom/Gomorrah were judged and destroyed everlastingly.*

Looking elsewhere, we find it noteworthy that more than once the Bible links the Flood and Sodom/Gomorrah. In what context?

When asked about "the conclusion of the system of things," Jesus foretold the coming "end" and a "great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning." (Matthew 24:3, 14, 21) He went on to speak of "the days of Noah" and what "occurred in the days of Lot" as being examples of people who took no note of warning about coming destruc-

* At Ezekiel 16:53-55, "Sodom and her dependent towns" are mentioned, not in connection with the resurrection, but figuratively with regard to Jerusalem and her daughters. (Compare Revelation 11:8.) See also *The Watchtower*, June 1, 1952, page 337.



tion. Jesus added: "The same way it will be on that day when the Son of man is to be revealed." (Luke 17:26-30; compare Matthew 24:36-39.) Was Jesus illustrating just an attitude, or does the context in which he used these examples suggest that eternal judgments were involved?

Later, Peter wrote about God's judgments and His punishing those deserving it. Then Peter used three examples: The angels that sinned, the ancient world of Noah's time, and those destroyed in Sodom/Gomorrah. The latter, Peter said, 'set a pattern for ungodly persons of things to come.' (2 Peter 2:4-9) Thereafter, he compared the destruction that people suffered in the Deluge with the coming "day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men." That precedes the promised new heavens and new earth. —2 Peter 3:5-13.

Likewise, at the end of the present wicked system, will those whom God executes have had a final judgment? That is the indication of 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9: "It is righteous on God's part to repay tribulation to those who make tribulation for you, but, to you who suffer tribulation, relief along with

us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus. These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction from before the Lord and from the glory of his strength."

There is an interesting similarity in phraseology between this description and what Jude said occurred in the case of Sodom. Furthermore, Matthew 25:31-46 and Revelation 19:11-21 indicate that "the goats" cut off in the coming war of God will experience "everlasting cutting-off" in "the lake of fire," which symbolizes permanent annihilation.* —Revelation 20:10, 14.

Consequently, in addition to what Jude 7 says, the Bible uses Sodom/Gomorrah and the Flood as patterns for the destructive end of the present wicked system. It is apparent, then, that those whom God executed in those past judgments experienced irreversible destruction. Of course, each of us can confirm that by his proving faithful to Jehovah now. In that way we will qualify to be alive in the new world to see whom he resurrects and whom he does not. We know that his judgments are perfect. Elihu assured us: "For a fact, God himself does not act wickedly, and the Almighty himself does not pervert judgment." —Job 34:10, 12.

* Compare "Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower* of August 1, 1979.



visiting Lot. Their immoral behavior was so extreme that even when they were miraculously struck with blindness, “they were wearing themselves out trying to find the entrance” of the house to get inside to have intercourse with Lot’s visitors.—Genesis 19: 4-11.

⁹ Will such terribly wicked persons be resurrected during Judgment Day? The Scriptures indicate that apparently they will not. For example, one of Jesus’ inspired disciples, Jude, wrote first about the angels that forsook their place in heaven to have relations with the daughters of men. Then he added: “So too Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them, after they in the same manner as the foregoing ones had committed fornication excessively and gone out after flesh for unnatural use, are placed before us as a warning example by undergoing the judicial punishment of everlasting fire.” (Jude 6, 7; Genesis 6:1, 2) Yes, for their excessive immorality the people of Sodom and of the surrounding cities suffered a destruction from which they will apparently never be resurrected.—2 Peter 2:4-6, 9, 10a.

¹⁰ Jesus too indicated that the Sodomites may not be resurrected. When he spoke of Capernaum, one of the cities where he performed miracles, he said: “If the powerful works that took place in you [Capernaum] had taken place in Sodom, it would have remained until this very day. Consequently I say to you people, It will be more endurable for the land of Sodom on Judgment Day than for you.” (Matthew 11:22-24) Jesus here was emphasizing the reprehensibility of the people of Capernaum by saying that it would be more endurable for the ancient Sodomites who, in the minds of his Israelite audience, were totally unworthy of a resurrection on Judgment Day.

¹¹ Surely, then, we should do everything we can to live our lives so as to merit a resurrection. But it may still be asked: Will it be more difficult for some of the resurrected dead to learn and practice righteousness than it will be for others? Well, consider:

9, 10. What do the Scriptures indicate about the prospect of a resurrection for the wicked persons of Sodom?

11. Why will it be easier on Judgment Day for the “righteous” than for any of the “unrighteous”?