



# EndTime Issues ...

An e-publication of Prophecy Research Initiative

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**This ministry is dedicated to a progressive understanding of truth apropos to the last generation to live on earth.**

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**Welcome to *EndTime Issues*...**

Large segments of the Protestant world are currently expressing a premonition that an apocalyptic end is near. There are many reasons that they are correct. Two alarming Old Testament stories beg such understanding.

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## **As it Was – So it Will Be**

### **Introduction**

In apocalyptic thought, the period before the eschaton is associated with “*desolation*” (Matthew 24:15, Daniel 11:31, 12:11) and the *final* end with “*fire and brimstone*” (Ezekiel 38:22; Revelation 14:10, 19:10, 20:10, 21:8). In Genesis there are two divinely appointed destructive events that serve as “harbingers” to earth’s climax.

#### 1. The Great Deluge – Noah’s Flood

- This occurred when God’s emotions surfaced and were recorded: “*It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at heart*” (Genesis 6:6).
- The catalyst? “*Wickedness,*” “*every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*” (Genesis 6:5), all flesh had become “*corrupt*” (6:12) and “*violence*” filled the earth (6:11, 13).

#### 2. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24-25). It was first “prophesied” to Abraham (Genesis 18:20-21) just hours before that cataclysmic end.

- “*Their sin is very grievous.*”
- They even wished to have sexual relations with Lot’s two guests (Genesis 19:5), who were angels disguised as men.

In both accounts, life was proceeding *normally* in the “community.” In each end, one can observe three overriding issues:

1. The citizens of the world and those in the cities of the plain were so wicked that God's tolerant mercy ended and His lethal wrath erupted.
2. The onset came abruptly to the wicked; there was no further chance to repent.
3. To the faithful, with both Noah and Lot, there was a warning period associated with a divine intervention to save.

### **Dealing with Curious Questions – The Preamble**

The Pharisees queried, "**When** is the kingdom of God coming?" (Luke 17:20). Jesus replied, "*Not with observation*" – "*It is in your midst*" (Luke 17:21 – NAS, NET, NIV, NRS), announcing that it had been inaugurated. In your midst means – "It is within your grasp."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus' answer immediately drew the attention of those leaders to a spiritual kingdom (Luke 17:20-21). Then He turned to the disciples (22-37). To the Pharisees, the answer is pointed: "You won't be able to tell physically – but there is a higher concern you need to understand!" To His disciples, His discourse pointed forward to the time when signs would quickly expect a physical kingdom.

- For the disciples and us, He further said, "Do not be deceived when people tell you that Christ has come" (17:22-23 paraphrased) You will know very well when He comes again; it will be like a flash of lightning that everyone will see (24). Then, for the disciples' sake, He interjects a warning. Before this can happen, "I must be tortured and crucified as man's Redeemer" (25). From our vantage point, which the disciples did not have, we know that this was met at Golgotha or Calvary. Of that, they needed to be reminded to temper their expectations.
- Then He gave details about the **conditions in the world** when He does return – those signs; it will be as it was in the days of Noah and Lot (26-30).<sup>2</sup>

The disciples' curiosity is now aroused. Jesus, with instructive caution, says: "*The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but **you will not see it.***" (Luke 17:22 – NIV) [referring to seeing Him head that physical kingdom and, more specifically, at His Second Coming (*parousia*)<sup>3</sup>].

- This, again, is a pointed statement to mellow their expectations. This won't happen in their lifetime.
- They are assured that He will come to wield authority and justice. But for them it would not be a reality (cf. Acts 1:7). The kingdom that **they craved** would be a glorious earthly reign with power, subduing all enemies. That was not on Christ's heart.

A spiritual kingdom has begun. Pharisees and disciples – focus on that! There will be a physical kingdom in "Heaven" (John 18:36). You will not see that time approaching. For those who do, there is further information.

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, I. Howard, *The Gospel of Luke* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, MI – 1978), p. 655.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/3017/Signs-of-Christ's-Return.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Bock, Darrell L.; *Luke 9:51–24:53*, vol. B (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI; 1996), p. 1426.

God has an appropriate time for His glorious kingdom. Undoubtedly, the disciples (likely also the Pharisees who were still listening) were thinking: “If it is going to be delayed, what will happen at the time the Messiah actually arrives with power? Have we misunderstood that event?”

- Jesus is about to use familiar stories from the Torah. What He is about to say, all Bible students right up to that final time can use and understand.
- There are specific events that will herald His coming.

What the saints are to be cognizant of is a dramatic theater of signs that unquestionably will announce the onset of His physical kingdom.

- *“For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day”* (Luke 17:24).
- Matthew fills in details: *“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be”* (Matthew 24:27; cf. Isaiah 41:25).

The disciples were “not to see,” yet clearly the events they hoped for will be seen by others (implied). It will be at the future climax of God’s redemptive purposes.<sup>4</sup> To add to that undoubted disappointment, Jesus gave that sad notice: *“But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation”* (Luke 17:25 – NKJV).

- That part is something they will see and emotionally experience.
- Focus on that – for now. That is My greater purpose – for now!

Though Christ’s death appears to have been an issue of denial until its occurrence, just before He ascended their memory was lit up! *“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?”* (Acts 1:6). Jesus responded:

- *“And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power”* (Acts 1:7).
- “You have work to do. Focus on that (Acts 1:8). You will not see those days.” Their mission, based upon His death and resurrection, would inaugurate the great Christian era.

In Matthew 25 Jesus made it quite clear that the physical kingdom would arrive at His Second Coming

- *“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, **then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory*** (Matthew 25:31).

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<sup>4</sup> Green, Gene L.; *Luke* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI, 2008), p. 633.

- ***“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”*** (Matthew 25:34).

### **Christ’s Eschatological Perspective – from Noah**

The “end” or “visible kingdom” is still on the minds of Christ’s hearers. He begins to fill in details of that kingdom that is apropos to us today.

- *“And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man”* (Luke 17:26).
- The *“days of Noah”* (I Peter 3:20) is a reference spanning his lifetime.<sup>5</sup>
- Matthew 24:37 speaks of that end time as at the *parousia* (coming of the Son of Man). For Luke, it is referenced as the *“days of the Son of Man”* (vs 24). Both point to the Second Coming.

Most interesting – this prophecy was given more than once? In Matthew it is on the Mount of Olives (The Olivet Discourse). In Luke, the Pharisees are present. They apparently had arrived in Jerusalem (cf. Luke 17:11).

- What was it like in the days of Noah? *“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”* (Luke 17:27). Life appeared to be *normal* – perhaps suggesting that it was easy and with much celebration.
- They sensed no need for God. There was no “religious interest or urgency.”<sup>6</sup>

Though Noah warned of the coming destruction (likely also with his living ancestors), Matthew made this fascinating observation:

- *“... and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man”* (Matthew 24:39 – NIV).
- Their consciences were numb, denying that any possible judicial act of God was possible. They became oblivious to any life-threatening event.<sup>7</sup>

In contradistinction, Noah moved forward in the ark’s preparation with *“fear”* (KJV), *“holy fear”* (NIV) and *“reverent regard”* (NET) for fulfilling God’s purpose.

- *“By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith”* (Hebrews 11:7 – NRS).
- The flood came and they were *“swept away”* – *“destroyed.”*
- What finally happened? The imagination knows few limits.

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<sup>5</sup> Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 663.

<sup>6</sup> Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 634-635.

<sup>7</sup> Turner, David L.; *Matthew* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 589.

“For seven days after Noah and his family entered the ark, there appeared no sign of the coming storm. During this period their faith was tested. It was a time of triumph to the world without. The apparent delay confirmed them in the belief that Noah’s message was a delusion, and that the Flood would never come.

“But upon the eighth day dark clouds overspread the heavens. There followed the muttering of thunder and the flash of lightning. Soon large drops of rain began to fall. The world had never witnessed anything like this, and the hearts of men were struck with fear. All were secretly inquiring, ‘Can it be that Noah was in the right, and that the world is doomed to destruction?’ Darker and darker grew the heavens, and faster came the falling rain.... Then ‘the fountains of the great deep’ were ‘broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.’ ...

“Conscience was at last aroused to know that there is a God who ruleth in the heavens. They called upon Him earnestly, but His ear was not open to their cry. In that terrible hour they saw that the transgression of God’s law had caused their ruin. Yet while, through fear of punishment, they acknowledged their sin, they felt no true contrition, no abhorrence of evil. They would have returned to their defiance of Heaven, had the judgment been removed. So when God’s judgments shall fall upon the earth before its deluge by fire, the impenitent will know just where and what their sin is – the despising of His holy law. Yet they will have no more true repentance than did the old-world sinners.”<sup>8</sup>

### ***As it was – so shall it be.***

This picture represents what society will be like when Christ returns! That is the greater context of Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 17! There is an assumption by many Christians that when He returns, His kingdom will be set up on earth. That is the same error the disciples harbored until after His ascension (Acts 1:7).

- Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36).
- Jesus also said that He was going to His “*Father’s house*” to prepare mansions for His people (John 14:1-3).
- Paul said that when He returns, we will be “*caught up*” to meet Him “*in the air*” (I Thessalonians 4:17).

The Bible makes explicitly clear that the earthly kingdom will not be established until after the millennium (Revelation 20). Then comes the destruction by fire and, finally, a new heaven and a new earth are created (Revelation 21). That is when Christ’s amazing earthly reign begins!

### **End-Time Lessons from Noah**

1. A time of self-serving “normalcy” is portrayed, as earth’s inhabitants were driven to defy God with every imaginable evil involving the whole earth.
2. He chose an earthly witness – Noah. Near the end – there will be “*two witnesses*” (Revelation 11:3-7a) under the power of the Holy Spirit who give the last warning.

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<sup>8</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 98-100.

3. A probationary timing prophecy was given – 120 years. At the eschaton – it will be three and a half years.
4. Preparation issues are clear:
  - a. Noah had a distinct warning message. At the end – there will not only be the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 and 18 but what is found in the “*little book*” of Revelation 10. The world will need to hear those details.
  - b. Noah's ark of safety is symbolic of security. At the end – one's trust in Jesus Christ is so firm that it carries them through the “*great tribulation.*”
5. A final warning is given by observing all the animals entering the ark without human guidance. At the end – a message that the hour of His judgment is about to begin is given. Time will then be very short (Revelation 14:6-7). Many warning signs will herald earth's climax.
6. When the door on the ark was shut, it was too late to repent. At the end – a point in time prior to Christ's coming will end all possible repentance (Revelation 22:7, 11, 20). At the end, when the seven vial plagues begin – it will be too late (Revelation 16).
7. Noah and his family were saved. At the end – a number too great to number will be saved! (cf. Revelation 7:9, 13-17). That is a wonderful prophecy!
8. For Noah, the world changed and was vastly marred. At the end – the world will be desolate when He comes (Matthew 24:15, Daniel 12:11). Everything will have been destroyed. The saints will be rescued (Daniel 12:1).

### **Christ's Eschatological Perspective – from Lot**

Neither Matthew nor Mark allude to Lot in their end-time discourse. Since only four disciples heard Christ on the Mt. of Olives, none of which were authors of the gospels, some scholars suggest that Luke had an additional resource. This was likely a second narrative by Christ, as noted, in Jerusalem (Luke 17:11).

This is so different in its onset from the flood narrative. Abraham is visited by three strangers. They are from the center of the universe. They come as “messengers.” Abraham recognizes one as “*Lord*” and worships Him. The destruction of Sodom appears to be already predetermined.

- The Biblical references to Sodom commonly assume the activity of an immoral people, though this issue is not emphasized in Luke's account (cf. Deut. 32:32-33; Isa. 1:10; Jer. 23:14; Lam. 4:6; Ezek. 16:45-52 [esp. 16:49]; Jude 7; Luke 10:12.<sup>9</sup>)
- *“I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah”* (Jeremiah 23:14).

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<sup>9</sup> Bock, *op. cit.*, p. 1433.

- “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy” (Ezekiel 16:49).

The Genesis account says that the Lord “*came down*” to investigate. It is a time of “judicial inquiry” (Genesis 18:17). A parallel is seen in Revelation 10, when a “*mighty angel*” (Jesus) comes down with a little open book and declares that time would no longer be delayed (10:1-2, 6 – NIV). Then in Revelation 11:1 (actually, a continuation of chapter 10) there is a symbolic judicial inquiry with a measuring rod.

- Abraham becomes an inquiring witness to what was about to occur.
- There is implied a judicial investigation before destruction.
- And – before annihilation, a rescue mission is promised, revealing God’s mercy before time would run out.

Of interest are observations by Eriks Galenieks.<sup>10</sup>

- Abraham entertained heaven’s Guest at the brightest time of the day (Genesis 18:1). This recalls, “*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day*” (John 9:4).
- The angels arrived in Sodom at night (19:2, 15, 23, 27). “The use of an evening/night background imbues the narrative with an evil foreboding, trepidation, anxiety, and fear. Night and violence, danger and darkness are inseparably joined together.”<sup>11</sup>
- “After Lot and the messengers have reached their destiny, all of a sudden out of darkness comes a wicked mob bent on disgusting immoral deeds. The threatening atmosphere is enormously heightened by constant reminders that it is night – it is dark.”<sup>12</sup>
- At this period when light had vanished, evil men sought to sexually abuse those angels (unaware that they were heaven’s messengers) (Genesis 18:4-5).

The intensity of those wicked men to “use” those angels is described: “*And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door*” (Genesis 19:9b – NIV).

“Knowing that if provoked to violence they could easily break into his house, Lot went out to try the effect of persuasion .... ‘I pray you, brethren,’ he said, ‘do not so wickedly,’ using the term ‘brethren’ in the sense of neighbors, and hoping to conciliate them and make them ashamed of their vile purposes. But his words were like oil upon the flames. ***Their rage became like the roaring of a tempest. They mocked Lot as making himself a judge over them, and threatened to deal worse with him than they had purposed toward his guests.*** They rushed upon him, and would have torn him in pieces had he not been rescued by the angels of God. The heavenly messengers ‘put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house ... , and shut ... the door.’”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Galenieks, Eriks; *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, vol. 11, Numbers 1 & 2, Spring–Autumn 2000, pp. 163-173.

<sup>11</sup> Galenieks, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. p. 159.

The angels urged Lot to bring his family, who were scattered throughout the city, to his house (Genesis 18:12). Lot was informed that the city was going to be destroyed (vs 13). He did go out to implore them to join him. This was during the night. Those riotous men were neutralized by being struck with blindness (Genesis 18:15-17). Lot, his two daughters (apparently married) and his wife were the only ones loyal to the command. In Luke's narrative, "there is surprisingly no mention of the sins of Sodom. It is the **thought of unpreparedness** and **attachment to earthly pursuits** rather than of sin which is uppermost" in this discourse.<sup>14</sup>

There is another instructive element in this Biblical narrative! When night was past and the "morning arose": "At dawn the angels hurried Lot along, saying, 'Get going! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or else you will be destroyed when the city is judged!'" (Genesis 19:15 – NET).

- Lot, his wife and two daughters were "chosen" to be saved. Yet, it says:
- "And while **he lingered**, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city" (Genesis 19:16 – NET).

Lot lingered in the face of these heaven-directed beings – he hesitated, he tarried. God's mercy is then demonstrated in a profound way! Lot's wavering faith is strengthened by those angels, who took the hands of these four, leading them to a safe place. There is another puzzling behavior of Lot:

- "And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad [outside the city], that he said, *Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, **Oh, not so, my Lord***" (Genesis 19:17-18).
- First, Lot delayed, then he hesitated to flee to the mountains.

Finally, he negotiates with the angels to go to a small city, called Bela, later named Zoar, for fear of the "mountains." Stunning and difficult to believe, this man is a "reluctant follower" of God. Equally stunning is the capitulation of those angels. This is a dramatic illustration of God's patience and willingness to adjust horizontal circumstances to maintain a vertical relationship. God's wrath waited to protect those fugitives!

- However – tragedy was the result.
- That "city" or "village" (Zoar) was one place that was to have been destroyed (Genesis 19:21). Thus, Lot and his family were thrust into another sinful environment.
- Lot's wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt.

Though God's mercy is great, and His grace lingers, a point in time comes when justice takes the ascendancy. Could things have been different if Lot had not hesitated? Some think so.

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<sup>14</sup> Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 664.



“If Lot himself had manifested no hesitancy to obey the angels’ warning, but had earnestly fled toward the mountains, without one word of pleading or remonstrance, his wife also would have made her escape. The influence of his example would have saved her from the sin that sealed her doom. But his hesitancy and delay caused her to lightly regard the divine warning. While her body was upon the plain, her heart clung to Sodom, and she perished with it. She rebelled against God because His judgments involved her possessions and her children in the ruin.... Instead of thankfully accepting deliverance, she presumptuously looked back to desire the life of those who had rejected the divine warning. Her sin showed her to be unworthy of life, for the preservation of which she felt so little gratitude.”<sup>15</sup>

To some, God’s mercy may seem to have been too great. To others, God’s justice may seem to have been too harsh. The Biblical record, often through such stories, reveals the balance of God’s patient mercy and the finality of His dealing with sin!

Six times divine intervention extended mercy and assistance to Lot at a time of facing destruction:

1. Angels coming to announce an apocalyptic end.
2. Drawing Lot back into the house from sinful intruders.
3. Period of probation to warn his family.
4. Pleading with Lot to leave and then to escape with his wife and daughters.
5. Taking his family by the hand leading them outside of the city.
6. Negotiating where a place of safety might be.

### **End-Time Lessons from Lot**

1. The messengers that visited Abraham are from outside planet earth. They have come to visit a loyal leader, Abraham.
  - One identified Himself as Jehovah (18:14).
  - A parallel exists in Revelation 10:1. An angel comes down from heaven to visit John.
  - He would know this to be Jesus from his visionary experience in Revelation 1:10-20.
2. The Lord queried: “*Should I hide from Abraham what I am about to do!*” (Genesis 18:17).
  - The angel of Revelation 10:2 had an open book in His hand. Its message is no longer hidden.
  - John would be asked to eat it (Revelation 10:9-10) so He would fully understand its content.
3. The coming down suggests prior concerns.
  - Abraham participated in those concerns through many questions (Genesis 18:22-33).

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<sup>15</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 161.

- John is asked to measure the church, its worshipers and the center of leadership – the altar (Revelation 11:1) to identify those still loyal to God – a divine concern.
4. The two angels/messengers pressed toward Sodom’s gate. It has become night. The city is wrapped in the darkness of evil. Lot is called to come out of the city, where he can be saved. He is asked to warn his *family*.
    - John is told to prophesy “*against*” the leaders and peoples of the wicked world (Revelation 10:11).<sup>16</sup> (The correct translation.)
    - This work is reflected by the “*two witnesses*” (Revelation 11:5-6).
  5. Lot finishes his work. There are no takers. This parallels the renewed, final warning beyond the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12, recorded in 18:1-5.
 

There, the wickedness of the city of Babylon is described: “*And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird*” (18:2). There, the invitation is given: “*And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, **Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues***” (18:4).
  6. The two angels move to help Lot, his wife and two daughters flee from Sodom.
    - Babylon is a city in Revelation that is symbolic of apostasy. It is the focus of God’s wrath. This is prophesied in the second and third angels’ narratives (Revelation 14:8-11).
    - The cry to flee to the mountains from Jerusalem (which is by then in apostasy) is seen in the Olivet discourse (Matthew 24:16-20). In Revelation that “city” is Babylon. They were not to turn back for any reason.
    - God aids His people to escape from evil (flee) in the “*deliverance*” of God’s people promised in Daniel 12:1, at the time of the great tribulation.
  7. Lot and his family were given a message of mercy, an escape plan. Not only were they advised as to where to go (the mountains, symbolic of a place of protection), but to do it with haste and without looking back. They were summoned to “*flee.*”
 

Jesus warned us in the Olivet discourse to flee to the “*mountains*” when the “*abomination*” surrounds God’s people and even enters the place of worship (Matthew 24:15-21).
  8. Lot was saved with his two daughters.
    - The saints will be saved when Jesus returns (Revelation 1:7; 11:12, 15; Matthew 24:30-31, 25:31, 33-34).
  9. Sodom was destroyed by fire and brimstone.
    - Babylon will be destroyed by fire and brimstone (Revelation 14:10).
    - After it is split into its three parts during the seventh plague (Revelation 16:19).

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<sup>16</sup> Beale, Gregory K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – 1999), pp. 554-555.

- Then destruction comes: *“Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning”* (Revelation 18:8-9). The world will become desolate. Nothing will be left that could ever attract humanity again!

10. Lot’s wife shows that God will judge us individually. “Despite how close we may be to another – a spouse, a neighbor, a co-worker – our obedience and good works will not deliver anyone else (Ezekiel 14:12-20). We will have to prove ourselves to the righteous Judge of all (Acts 17:31; Romans 14:10).”<sup>17</sup>

God’s wrath is predicted. He takes instructive steps to heighten the urgency of that time: time of sorrows from calamities (Matthew 24:7-8) and trumpet plagues with mercy (though likely thousands will die) (Revelation 8-9).

“All the judgments upon men, prior to the close of probation, have been mingled with mercy. The pleading blood of Christ has shielded the sinner from receiving the full measure of his guilt; but in the final judgment, wrath is poured out unmixed with mercy.”<sup>18</sup>

“There is an unerring register kept of all sins committed. All man’s impiety, all his disobedience to Heaven’s commands, are written in the books of heaven with unerring accuracy. The figures of guilt rapidly accumulate, yet the judgments of God are tempered with mercy, until the figures have reached their appointed limit. God bears long with the transgression of human beings, and continues through His appointed agencies to present the gospel message, until the set time has come. God bears with divine patience with the perversity of the wicked; but He declares that He will visit their transgressions with a rod. He will at last permit the destructive agencies of Satan to bear sway to destroy.”<sup>19</sup>

### **The Eschatological Tie**

Matthew and Luke quote Jesus as warning everyone of the necessity of being prepared for His coming. *“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh”* (Matthew 24:44). *“Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not”* (Luke 12:40).

- This was the great issue in both the great deluge and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.
- In mercy, God has given an incredible array of “signs” which warn that this great event is nearing (most beyond the scope of this article). But within those narratives are two major issues that the Old Testament narrative focuses on: violence and moral depravity.

**Violence** in Genesis 6:13: God said that one of the major reasons for the flood was violence. Of contemporary interest:

<sup>17</sup> <https://carm.org/sodom-gomorrah>

<sup>18</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Maranatha*, p. 267.

<sup>19</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Manuscript 17*, 1906; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1171.

- An estimated 203 million people were killed by wars in the twentieth century.<sup>20</sup> An additional 170 million individuals were killed by governments.
- Since 1980 (as of 06-21-19 at 4:35 p.m.) there were 1,538,936,034 abortions. On that date and hour (06-21-19, 4:35 p.m.) 75,819 abortions were carried out.<sup>21</sup>
- “The Impact of Media Violence” estimates that by age 18, in the United States, a child has seen 200,000 acts of violence. Even 15% of music videos contain interpersonal violence.

It appears that we are close to replicating days similar to those of Noah!

**Immorality**, the sexual revolution of the 1960’s, brought America to a cultural crossroad and created a major threat to God’s moral standards. Judeo-Christian values were suddenly under siege. What was the catalyst? Many things seemed to coalesce:

1. The unpopular Vietnam War,<sup>22</sup> with its counterculture.
2. Birth control pills became legal in 1965. By 1973 abortion became legal. Over the next sixty years, the media and public schools have promoted sexual freedom, deviance, unfettered gender identity, gender sharing of public bathroom and shower facilities and even idolizing nudity. Pornography, with its access through internet browsers, is culturally used by a high percentage of teens and adults – cultural acceptance to what the Bible warns is defiance of God’s elevated standards.<sup>23</sup>

These have changed the world – from the expansion of the modern welfare states, with enormous idle time, to massive numbers of children without fathers, who base their lifestyles on feelings rather than principle.<sup>24</sup>

- Many aging individuals face end-of-life challenges from this era without any strong family support. There is a growing cottage industry by social scientists dealing with loneliness.
- The pornography industry has led to increasing assumptions by men that their drives were shared by the women they abused. Thus, victimization, which has led to the Me-Too Movement, and much social chaos.

There are many references in the Bible to Sodom and/or Gomorrah [e.g. Ezekiel 16:48–50, Amos 4:1–11 and Zephaniah 2:9, Romans 9:29, Isaiah 1:9 (RSV), II Peter 2:4-10 and Jude 1:7]. The collective problems: Sexual immorality, perversion, idleness and being spiritually unprepared.

It appears that we have replicated the days of Lot.

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<sup>20</sup> White, Matthew; *Historical Atlas of the Twentieth Century*, “Deaths by War,” 2010.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.numberofabortions.com/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.history.com/news/vietnam-war-hippies-counter-culture>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.historyofsexuality.umwblogs.org/mid-to-late-20th-century/the-sexual-revolution/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.weeklystandard.com/mary-eberstadt/five-reasons-the-sexual-revolution-has-been-a-disaster>

## **Conclusion**

The state of corruption and apostasy, that in the last days would even exist in the religious world, was symbolically presented to the prophet John in his vision of Babylon, “*that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth*” (Revelation 17:18). Paul describes the details of that apostasy (II Timothy 3:1-5). As in the days of Noah and Lot, there must finally be a marked separation from sin and sinners by God’s people. There can be no compromise between God and the world, no turning back to secure “earthly treasures.” “*Ye cannot serve God and mammon*” (Matthew 6:24).<sup>25</sup>

God’s completed “work” against sin came when the world was destroyed by the deluge, then when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone. The latter is a prototype of the final destruction of the world (Revelation 14:10, 19:20, 20:10, 21:8) at the end of the millennium. An “end” is just before us. God’s justice will rise, and the destruction of evil will bring eternal harmony and peace.

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<sup>25</sup> White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 167.