

2 Peter 2:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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;

Analysis

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. Peter's third historical judgment example: Sodom and Gomorrah. "Turning... into ashes" (tephrōsas, τεφρώσας) literally means "reducing to ashes"—total destruction by fire. "Condemned them with an overthrow" (katastrophē katekrinen, καταστροφῇ κατέκρινεν) uses legal terminology: divine verdict executed through catastrophic judgment (Gen 19).

"Making them an ensample" (hypodeigma tetheikas, ὑπόδειγμα τεθεικώς) means "setting them as a pattern" or "example." The cities' destruction serves as visual, historical warning to "those that after should live ungodly" (mellontōn asebein, μελλόντων ἀσεβεῖν). Asebein (ἀσεβεῖν) denotes active ungodliness—willful rejection of God's authority and standards, precisely characterizing the false teachers.

This third example completes Peter's trilogy: fallen angels (supernatural judgment), Noah's flood (universal judgment), Sodom/Gomorrah (localized but total judgment). All demonstrate God's consistent pattern—certain judgment on unrepentant evil. The cities' ongoing archaeological desolation testifies to divine judgment's reality. False teachers ignore this testimony to their peril.

Historical Context

Sodom and Gomorrah became proverbial in Jewish and Christian teaching as examples of divine judgment on sexual immorality and social injustice (Isa 1:9-10; 3:9; Jer 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; Lam 4:6; Ezek 16:46-56; Amos 4:11; Matt 10:15; 11:23-24; Luke 10:12; 17:29; Rom 9:29; Jude 7; Rev 11:8). The cities' sins included prideful abundance while ignoring the poor (Ezek 16:49) and notorious sexual perversion (Gen 19:4-9; Jude 7).

Ancient and modern archaeology has sought the cities' location, with various sites proposed around the Dead Sea region showing evidence of catastrophic destruction consistent with biblical accounts. Whether supernatural fire-and-brimstone or divinely-timed natural disaster (earthquake igniting petroleum deposits), the biblical emphasis is theological: God judged flagrant, persistent wickedness. Lot's rescue demonstrates God's mercy toward the righteous even amid comprehensive judgment on the wicked.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does contemporary cultural celebration of sexual immorality mirror Sodom's trajectory toward judgment?
2. In what ways might you be tempted to compromise biblical sexual ethics to avoid cultural disapproval?
3. How can churches maintain both biblical faithfulness and compassionate ministry to those caught in sexual sin?

Interlinear Text

καὶ πόλεις Σοδόμων καὶ Γομόρρας τεφρώσας

And the cities of Sodom And Gomorrha into ashes
G2532 G4172 G4670 G2532 G1116 G5077

καταστροφῇ κατέκρινεν ὑπόδειγμα

them with an overthrow condemned them an ensample
G2692 G2632 G5262

μελλόντων ἀσεβεῖν τεθεικώς

unto those that after should live ungodly making
G3195 G764 G5087

Additional Cross-References

Jude 1:7 (Parallel theme): 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.

Deuteronomy 29:23 (Parallel theme): 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 of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:

Numbers 26:10 (Parallel theme): And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men: and they became a sign.

Isaiah 13:19 (Kingdom): And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

Jeremiah 50:40 (References God): As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein.

1 Corinthians 10:11 (Parallel theme): Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Zephaniah 2:9 (References God): Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.

Genesis 19:28 (Parallel theme): And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.

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