

**SODOM [SOD um]** — a city at the southern end of the Dead Sea destroyed because of its wickedness (GEN 10:19; ROM 9:29). Together with her sister cities—Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar—Sodom formed the famous **pentapolis** of the plain or circle of the Jordan (GEN 10:19; 13:10; 14:2) in the valley that surrounded the Dead Sea (GEN 14:3). Although Sodom was a notoriously wicked city, when Lot separated himself and his herdsmen from Abraham, he chose to pitch his tent toward Sodom (GEN 13:5–13). This was because the fertile plain that surrounded the city “was well watered everywhere” (GEN 13:10).

When Sodom was plundered by **CHEDORLAOMER**, the goods and captives he carried away had to be rescued by Abraham (GEN 14:11, 21–24). However, the wickedness of the people of the city continued, and God finally had to destroy Sodom. **Fire and brimstone** fell from heaven and consumed Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plain. When Lot’s wife looked back at Sodom, she was instantly changed into **a pillar of salt** (GEN 19:26).

Early tradition held that the northern end of the Dead Sea was the Valley of Sodom. But the geological conditions of the southern end of the Dead Sea matched those of the area around Sodom. Salt formations, asphalt, and sulfur are found in large quantities here. Many scholars believe the cities of the plain may be located beneath the shallow end of the Dead Sea. The basin surrounding the shallow southern end of the Dead Sea is fed by five streams, including the Wadi Zered (NUM 21:12), which would have provided for a fertile, well-watered plain. In addition, Zoar, one of the cities of the plain (GEN 13:10), is reported by the Jewish historian Jo-sephus to have been visible during his time at the southern end of the sea. Other scholars have recently claimed that the most likely site for the cities of the plain is on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea opposite Masada. The sin, vice, and infamy of Sodom and the judgment of God on this city is referred to often throughout the Bible (ISA 1:9–10; EZE 16:46–49; AMO 4:11; ROM 9:29).

**GOMORRAH [guh MOR ruh]** (*submersion*) — one of the five “cities of the plain” located **in the Valley of Siddim (Salt Sea or Dead Sea)**. The other cities were Sodom, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar (GEN 14:2–3). Gomorrah is associated closely with its twin city, Sodom. Because these cities became the site of intolerable wickedness, they were destroyed by fire (GEN 19:24, 28). The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is often referred to in the Bible as a clear example of divine judgment against the vilest of sinners (ISA 13:19; JER 49:18; AMO 4:11; MAT 10:15; 2PE 2:6; JUD 7). The exact location of the “cities of the plain” has been a subject of much debate. The current consensus, however, places them near Bab edh-Dhra, the entrance to the “tongue” (Lisan) of land that juts out into the Dead Sea on its eastern shore.

**SOD’OM** (*burning*), one of the most ancient cities of Syria. It is commonly mentioned in connection with Gomorrah, but also with **Admah** and **Zeboim**, and on one occasion—GEN 14—with **Bela (Zoar)**. Sodom was evidently the chief town in the settlement. The four are first named in the ethnological records of GEN 10:19 as belonging to the Canaanites. The next mention of the name of Sodom, GEN 13:10–13, gives more certain indication of the position of the city. Abram and Lot are standing together between Bethel and Ai, ver. 3, taking a survey of the land around and below them. Eastward of them, and absolutely at their feet, lay the “circle of Jordan.” The whole circle was one great oasis—“a garden of Jehovah.” ver. 10. In the midst of the garden **the four cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim** appear to have been situated. It is necessary to notice how absolutely the cities are identified with the district. In the subsequent account of their destruction, GEN 19, the topographical terms are employed with all the precision which is characteristic of such early times. The mention of the Jordan is conclusive as to the situation of the district, for the Jordan ceases where it enters the Dead Sea, and can have no existence south of that point. The catastrophe by which they were destroyed is described in GEN 19 as a shower of brimstone and fire from Jehovah. However we may interpret the words of the earliest narrative, one thing is certain—that the lake was not one of the agents in the catastrophe. From all these passages, though much is obscure, two things seem clear:

1. That Sodom and the rest of the cities of the plain of Jordan stood on the north of the Dead Sea;
2. That neither the cities nor the district were submerged by the lake, but that the cities were overthrown and the land spoiled, and that it may still be seen in its desolate condition. When, however, we turn to more modern views, we discover a remarkable variance from these conclusions.

The opinion long current that the five cities were submerged in the lake, and that their remains—walls, columns, and capitals—might be still discerned below the water, hardly needs refutation after the distinct statement and the constant implication of Scripture. But, 2. A more serious departure from the terms of the ancient history is exhibited in the prevalent opinion that the cities stood at the south end of the lake. This appears to have been the belief of Josephus and Jerome. It seems to have been universally held by the mediæval historians and pilgrims, and it is adopted by modern topographers probably without exception. There are several grounds for this belief; but the main point on which Dr. Robinson rests his argument is the situation of Zoar. (a) “Lot,” says he, “fled to Zoar, which was *near* to Sodom; and Zoar lay almost at the southern end of the present sea, probably in the mouth of *Wady Kerak*.” (b) Another consideration in favor of placing the cities at the southern end of the lake is the existence of similar names in that direction. (c) A third argument, and perhaps the weightiest of the three, is the existence of the salt mountain at the south of the lake, and its tendency to split off in columnar masses presenting a rude resemblance to the human form. But it is by no means certain that salt does not exist at other spots round the lake. (d) (A fourth and yet stronger argument is

drawn from the fact that Abraham saw the smoke of the burning cities from Hebron. (e) A fifth argument is found in the numerous lime-pits found at the southern end of the Dead Sea. Robinson, Schaff, Baedeker, Lieutenant Lynch, and others favor this view.—ED.) It thus appears that on the situation of Sodom no satisfactory conclusion can at present be reached. On the one hand, the narrative of Genesis seems to state positively that it lay at the *northern* end of the Dead Sea. On the other hand, long-continued tradition and the names of the existing spots seem to pronounce with almost equal positiveness that it was at its *southern* end. Of the catastrophe which destroyed the city and the district of Sodom we can hardly hope ever to form a satisfactory conception. Some catastrophe there undoubtedly was; but what secondary agencies, besides fire, were employed in the accomplishment of the punishment cannot be safely determined in the almost total absence of exact scientific description of the natural features of the ground round the lake. We may suppose, however, that the actual agent in the ignition and destruction of the cities had been of the nature of a tremendous thunder-storm accompanied by a discharge of meteoric stones, (and that these set on fire the bitumen with which the soil was saturated, and which was used in building the city. And it may be that this burning out of the soil caused the plain to sink below the level of the Dead Sea, and the waters to flow over it—if indeed Sodom and its sister cities are really under the water.—ED.) The miserable fate of Sodom and Gomorrah is held up as a warning in numerous passages of the Old and New Testaments. MAR 6:11; 2PE 2:6; JUD 4-7.

**GOMOR'RAH** (*submersion*), one of the five "cities of the plain" or "vale of Siddim" that under their respective kings joined battle there with Chedorlaomer, GEN 14:2-8, and his allies, by whom they were discomfited till Abraham came to the rescue. Four out of the five were afterwards destroyed by the Lord with fire from heaven. GEN 19:23-29. One of them only, Zoar (or Bela, which was its original name), was spared at the request of Lot, in order that he might take refuge there. The geographical position of these cities is discussed under SODOM.

<b>Sodom—burnt</b>		<b>C. <i>Sin of, illustrative of:</i></b>	
A. <i>History of:</i>		Shamelessness	ISA 3:9
Located in Jordan plain	GEN 13:10	Obduracy	JER 23:14
Became Lot's residence	GEN 13:11-13	Unnaturalness	JUD 7
Wickedness of, notorious	GEN 13:13	D. <i>Figurative of:</i>	
Plundered by Chedorlaomer	GEN 14:9-24	Wickedness	DEU 32:32
Abraham interceded for	GEN 18:16-33	Jerusalem	ISA 1:9, 10
Destroyed by God	GEN 19:1-28	Judah	EZE 16:46-63
Lot sent out of	GEN 19:29, 30	<b>Gomorrah—submersion</b>	
B. <i>Destruction of, illustrative of:</i>		In a fruitful valley	GEN 13:10
God's wrath	DEU 29:23	Defeated by Chedorlaomer	GEN 14:8-11
Sudden destruction	LAM 4:6	Destroyed by God	GEN 19:23-29
Total destruction	JER 49:18	Symbol of evil	ISA 1:10
Future judgment	MAT 11:23, 24	Symbol of destruction	AMO 4:11
Example to the ungodly	2PE 2:6	Punishment of	MAT 10:15

**SODOM**, called also SODOMA. Situated in the plain of the Jordan, GEN 13:10. The southeastern limit of the Canaanites, GEN 10:19. Lot dwells at, GEN 13:12. King of, joins other kings of the nations resisting the invasion of Chedorlaomer, GEN 14:1-12. Wickedness of the inhabitants of, GEN 13:13; 19:4-13; DEU 32:32; ISA 3:9; JER 23:14; LAM 4:6; EZE 16:46,48,49; JUD 7. Abraham's intercession for, GEN 18:16-33. Destroyed on account of the wickedness of the people, GEN 19:1-29; DEU 29:23; ISA 13:19; JER 49:18; 50:40; LAM 4:6; AMO 4:11; ZEP 2:9; MAT 10:15; Luke 17:29; ROM 9:29; 2PE 2:6.

**FIGURATIVE:** Of wickedness, DEU 23:17; 32:32; ISA 1:10; EZE 16:46-56.

**GOMORRAH**. One of the "cities of the plain," GEN 10:19; 13:10. Its king defeated by Chedorlaomer, GEN 14:2,8-11. Wickedness of, GEN 18:20. Destroyed, GEN 19:24-28; DEU 29:23; 32:32; ISA 1:9,10; 13:19; JER 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; AMO 4:11; ZEP 2:9; MAT 10:15; MAR 6:11; ROM 9:29; 2PE 2:6; JUD 7.

1. **DEU 32:30** How could one chase a thousand, And two put ten thousand to flight, Unless their Rock had sold them, And the Lord had surrendered them? 31 For their rock is not like our Rock, Even our enemies themselves being judges. 32 For their vine is of the vine of Sodom And of the fields of Gomorrah; Their grapes are grapes of gall, Their clusters are bitter. 33 Their wine is the poison of serpents, And the cruel venom of cobras.
2. **GEN 19:5** And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally."