

Keys to Dynamic Bible Study
A Tale of Twin Cities
Read Genesis 19

It was a twice told tale that skipped the good and went from the bad to the ugly. Though it had been narrated before, this tale of perverse circumstances was being played out *again*. The second event may have occurred at a different time, with a different cast of characters, and in another city; nevertheless, the essential, reprehensible ingredients remained unchanged. Now God's people would have a double warning: intertwining yourself with those who do not fear God can reap devastation.

In the first affair, two men—really angels—had arrived at Sodom's business district which was the gateway into the city. The ever-hospitable Lot, who had once dwelled on the western plains with Abraham his uncle, arose from his seat at the gate in order to meet the men. With proper protocol, he "bowed down" to the visitors (Genesis 19:1). At Lot's insistence, the two "**turned aside** and entered his house," in spite of their suggestion that they should "**spend the night in the square**," (vv. 2-3).

The **men of the city** of Sodom, with sexual appetites heightened by unknown visitors, "**surrounded the house**" (19:4). As Lot and his guests prepared for bed, the city dwellers began to bellow for the newcomers. They demanded that Lot "**bring them out**" so that they might "**know them**:" they wanted to have intimate relations with the two men (v. 5). Lot, striving to remedy the situation by slipping outside the door, pleaded that they would not "**act wickedly**," and offered his **two** virgin daughters to them (vv. 7-8). In the midst of a chaos that threatened to bring down Lot's front door, the hands of the two men within "reached out and brought Lot back into the house" (v. 10).

The crisis was not yet over. The next morning, Lot was to flee empty handed, from the judged city of Sodom, to the sanctuary of a nearby mountain. And so, his eastward trek from the peaceful tents of Abraham, to live amongst men who were "exceedingly wicked," ended in a cave (19:30).

Unfortunately, the debased scene is duplicated in the book of Judges, only uglier. At the conclusion of Judges (a time when the shameful Baal worship of the Canaanites was being embraced by Israelites), a nameless Israelite was traveling with his concubine through the land. The day was late as the traveler entered the city of Gibeah, hoping to find lodging. Discovering that no one was willing to provide a place to "**spend the night**," he forlornly sat down in the open **square** (19:15). By chance, a field worker passed by. Seeing the stranger, the worker invited him to his home after warning him not to "**spend the night in the open square**" (v. 20).

As the two feasted, however, "**men of the city surrounded the house** (19:22). Pounding on the door, these "worthless men" ordered the owner of the house to "**bring out**" the guest so that they might "**know him**" (v. 22). The homeowner ventured outside the house and begged them not to "**act so wickedly**" (v. 23). Then he offered to hand over **two** women: his own virgin daughter and the unsuspecting concubine of his guest. When the men of the city balked at the offer, the guest "seized his concubine and brought her out to them" (v. 25). Rather than being saved by the hands of two angels, the girl was raped and abused throughout the night, not by Sodomites, but by God's own people—Israelites!

The twin cities exhibited almost identical tales. The purposeful links between the two offered a double punch-line. Lot's interrelationship with the people of Sodom in the Promised Land left him homeless and penniless. And when the Israelites became enmeshed with the idolatrous practices of the people in the Promised Land, they ended up mimicking the people's sexually depraved lifestyle. Would Israel heed this twin warning? No. Will we?