

register in our souls and serve as a powerful dissuasive warning not to follow in her train. In order to more closely examine this incident, we propose to survey its *context*, *cause*, and *consequences*, believing that all three are collectively included in our Lord's stern warning.

The Context

The setting for Christ's "Lot's Wife" saying is the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when sudden catastrophe shall overtake the unsuspecting world of mankind, preoccupied as it will be with the everyday round of mundane details, as it was in the days of Lot just before the overthrow of Sodom. Jesus states:

"And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. 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. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation...." (Luke 17:22-25). "Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let

him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luke 17:28-33).

The Genesis account (Gen. 19:26) of Lot's wife's inordinate look back to Sodom reveals that she was trailing behind Lot, and perhaps even behind her two daughters as the four made their exodus from their home in Sodom. The Hebrew (שָׁתוּ מֵאַחֲרָיו וַתִּבֶּט - "and his wife looked from behind him") suggests that she moved more slowly as she trudged out of the doomed city. Perhaps this was because she was mentally distracted by a multitude of mixed memories concerning the forsaken city. Surely, the men of Sodom had proven incorrigibly wicked, fully meriting the destruction decreed by God. But the more pleasant side of the evil city appealed to her faltering heart. Many pleasant memories no doubt flooded her soul. Ah, Sodom...that dream city of plentiful bread, prize of the well-watered Jordan plain (Gen. 13:10), and the scene of unchecked luxury with its attendant pampered pride (Eze. 16:49). How she could have lived there forever! Maybe she recalled their original settlement in the city 20 years ago, and her husband's rise to prominence among the men of the city until he actually sat in the city gate (Gen. 19:1), exercising political influence in the affairs of Sodom. And how her mother's heart must have yearned for the four

children (two sons and two married daughters) left behind to perish. Had not her husband tried to warn them? Oh, Sodom, home for the children of her womb, pleasant scene of the past! How she longed to take one more look at the city—just a one-time glance to give relief to her pent-up emotions!

Lot's wife's look was an act of disobedience to the express command of God (Gen. 19:17), and resulted in her condemnation with the city of her longings. Jesus recognized that endtime saints would likewise be tempted to "look behind" to a life of temporal self-interest, forsaken former pleasures (I Pet. 1:14), and a past of worldly luxury (Num. 11:4,5), as the reality of the last day call begins to press its claims upon their souls. Perhaps they will be called to migrate to a safer location, as was Lot's family, or to flee persecution from city to city, as did the early Anabaptists, or even to leave all, at short notice, due to the urgency of a Divine mission (Luke 9:57-62; 14:33). Latter day conditions will undoubtedly disclose the commitment level of many professing Christians, with some failing the test of Lot's wife.

Even now, multitudes within the church seem to be ignoring the lesson of Lot's wife, attempting to "hang on" to the past by blending it with their shallow version of Christianity.

Such misguided attempts to serve Christ while simultaneously serving the world have given rise to such oxymoronic expressions, practices and organizations as "Christian beauty queen"; "Fellowship of Christian Athletes"; "Christian romance novels"; "Christian rock music"; "Christian rap music"; "Fellowship of Christian Magicians"; "gay bishops"; "Christian military involvement"; "Christian political action," etc. These misnomers represent, at least in many cases, an effort to merge the Christian faith with pre-conversion practices or activities reminiscent of the kingdoms of this world—as much a "looking back" as was Lot's wife's fatal glance.

We cannot wed the world and win Christ at the same time. This was the fatal oversight of Lot's wife. We cannot drink of the Lord's cup and the cup of devils, nor partake of the Lord's table and the table of devils (I Cor. 10:21). Those who attempt to combine such incompatibles reveal that they are unwilling to lose their lives in this world—a basic condition of New Testament discipleship (Matt 10:38,39 [amidst the friction of household foes]; Matt. 16:25 [in the matter of personal cross-bearing]; John 12:25 [in view of a deeper death to self]) and a fundamental consideration for endtime saints (Luke 17:33). As Christians we dare not think back upon, look back upon, or go back to the doomed

world we have forsaken.

The Cause

Lot's wife's interested look toward Sodom (Gen. 19:26- the Hebrew נָבַט in this context means to "look upon with consideration or regard") reflected an inward love for the comfort and ease of its lifestyle. She was so absorbed in the life of the city that she could not leave without looking back. Her heart was attached to Sodom's carnal security and her affections were wedded to its sinful life of self-pleasing. Lot's wife's cross was to leave Sodom without looking, but she failed to take it up in order to follow her Lord.

*Unable to leave the love of Sodom, wretched creature of the dust,
Unable to flee the brimstone's burning, without one final look of lust,
Unable to follow fully the Master, to walk stride for stride with Him,
But for the grace He giveth to day by day be true,
Grace to free from Sodom's longing, grace for me and grace for you.*

John the beloved apostle warned of the danger of world-love which so easily besets the believer: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that*

doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17). No true believer can harbor a fondness for the fading reality of this world. Lot's wife looked back because, though she had physically left Sodom, she remained spiritually and psychologically in the grip of Sodom. This fascination with sin, and its associated love of sinning, must be forever forsaken if the believer is to be delivered from this evil world (Gal. 1:4) and gain ground with God. Paul likewise emphasized that the Christian can never go forward if he is forever looking backward (Phil. 3:13,14). He recognized that a preoccupation with the past leads to paralysis in the present. Therefore he determined to forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24). They no longer long for Sodom, nor are they mindful of that country from whence they came out, for they seek a better country, that is an heavenly one (Heb. 11:14-16). Their affections are set on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father (Col. 3:1-5) and they have consequently mortified all inordinate love for things here below.

Until souls are loosed through a thoroughgoing sanctification (I Thess. 5:23) from an inordinate love of

of the world, they will ever be longing for past Sodoms and remain backsliders in heart (Prov. 14:14).

The Consequences

The dire consequence of Lot's wife's backward glance sounds a warning siren to every sensitive and spiritually-minded soul. According to Gen. 19:26, she was immediately transformed into a pillar of salt: *"But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."* The destruction of Sodom and the cities of the plain was a prototype of the future vengeance of eternal fire which will engulf a world in rebellion against God (II Pet. 2:6; Jude 7; II Thess. 1:8,9; II Pet. 3:7,10-12). This judgment, however, will overtake not only the men and women of the world, but also professing Christians who, like Lot's wife, have developed a love of, fondness for, and affinity with this present evil age. The solemn fact that one of righteous Lot's (II Pet. 2:7,8) own company was left to experience the fury of burning brimstone, becoming a salt deposit, serves as a stark reminder of the need of purifying our hearts (James 4:8; Matt. 5:8; Ps. 24:3,4), lest we be condemned with the world (I Cor. 11:31,32) in that day when "one shall be taken, and the other left" (Luke 17:35). The lesson of Lot's wife is a token for all time.

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Remember
Lot's
Wife

Lot's wife stands out upon the plain of Biblical history as a lone and signal figure, embodying the concepts of both unworthy conduct and horrific judgment. Her flight from a doomed sinful city, her affectionate, backward glance toward the life she loved, and the sudden judgment by fire that overtook her, etch in Christian memory the hideous danger of doing double service: i.e., seeking to serve God while at the same time yearning to cultivate and promote the life of temporal self-interest. What evident warning may be detected in our Lord's abrupt statement concerning the lesson of her life: *"Remember Lot's wife"* (Luke 17:32)! The Divine command to call to mind the tragedy of Lot's wife, therefore, begs further scrutiny, that the message Jesus seeks to convey through her untimely demise might