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Christ's Prediction. In His Olivet Discourse, Christ predicted that social wickedness would increase prior to His Return: "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12, NIV). In the same discourse Jesus exemplified the pre-Advent social wickedness by referring to two periods of Old Testament history, namely, the "days of Noah" and "the days of Lot."

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:26-30, NIV; cf. Matt 24:37-39).

The two examples of Noah's and Lot's times are used by Christ to stress two points. First, the wicked will be overtaken by the sudden and unexpected judgment of His Advent in the same way as the Flood and the destruction of Sodom overtook the people of Noah's and Lot's times. Second, people will act "in the days" before His Second Coming very much the same way as they did "in the days" of Noah and of Lot.

The latter is indicated by the use of the plural form "days of the Son of Man," which denotes the age preceding His Return, as "the days" of Noah and Lot refer to the age before the Flood and the destruction of Sodom. The parallelism is evident. Note that the singular form is used ("on the day," Luke 17:30) to designate the actual day of Christ's Coming. In other words, by these two examples Jesus illustrates not only the sudden judgment that will come upon impenitent mankind "on the day" of His Return, but also the social conditions that will prevail "in the days" before His Coming.

Godlessness and Wickedness. The social conditions of Noah's and Lot's times are described by a series of verbs (imperfect tense) expressing customary actions: they "were eating, drinking, marrying . . . buying and selling, planting and building." None of these activities are wrong in themselves. What is wrong is that the people in those days lived only to satisfy their appetites and material desires. God and godliness had no place in their lives.

In the mad search for pleasure and prosperity, mankind sank into such great depravity, that, the Scripture says, "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5; cf. 18:20-21). Jesus referred to the godlessness and wickedness of these ancient times to illustrate the alarming social conditions that would prevail before His Return.

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