

What is the significance of Zoar in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Zoar-in-the-Bible.html>

Zoar was a city located at the southeast end of the Dead Sea. The name Zoar means “little” or “insignificant.” It was also known as Bela during the time of Abraham (Genesis 14:2). Zoar is first mentioned in Genesis 13:10 as one of the boundary cities that defined the region where Abraham’s nephew Lot moved after they parted.

Zoar was one of the cities slated for destruction by God in Genesis 19 but was spared. While the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are featured most prominently in the destruction with fire and brimstone, other cities were included in the judgment. Genesis 19:24-25 says, “Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the Lord out of the heavens. Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land.” The other cities on that plain were Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar. However, because Lot did not think he could escape to the mountains in time, he pleaded to be allowed to take refuge in the little town of Zoar (verses 18-20). The Lord agreed to withhold His judgment until Lot and his family reached Zoar; then, God spared Zoar when the rest of the cities in the plain were destroyed (verses 21-25).

Later, Lot perceived Zoar to be unsafe for him and his two daughters to live in, so they moved into a cave outside Zoar (Genesis 19:30-38). It was in this isolated setting that his daughters feared they would never marry and have children, so they contrived an incestuous plan. They got their father drunk, had sex with him on two consecutive nights, and became pregnant with his children. The eldest daughter had a son she named Moab, which means “he is from my father.” The younger daughter also had a son and named him an equally shocking name: Ben-Ammi, which means “son of my father’s people.” The two

boys grew up to become the progenitors of the Moabites and the Ammonites.

Zoar is again mentioned in Isaiah 15:5 as part of the nation of Moab. It would make sense that the son of Lot by his eldest daughter would remain in the area of his birth and become the father of a vast tribe, the Moabites.

The town of Zoar escaped the righteous judgment of God only because God had mercy on it for the sake of Lot. Zoar deserved the same destruction that befell Sodom and Gomorrah, but because of the presence of a righteous man, God spared it (see 2 Peter 2:7). The presence of God's people makes a difference. As Jesus told His followers, we are to be salt and light in the world (Matthew 5:13-16). Salt is a preservative, and light illuminates darkness. It is the presence of God's people, the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-20), that keeps God's final judgment at bay (see 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8). But just as Zoar was eventually judged, so will this earth be when Jesus returns (Revelation 19:11-16). Until that day, Christians should live with the continual awareness that the light of Jesus in us needs to shine for the glory of God.