



On Saturday, June 12 cyclists from around New England and New York will get together in Vermont for Champ Ride '99. This is Vermont CARES' First Annual Bike Ride to raise critically needed funds to continue prevention education and direct services for people living with, or at high risk of, HIV/AIDS.

←-----→
 The ride is a 25/50/100-mile ride. Everyone can participate, no matter what your cycling ability. This is a great event for both novice and avid bicyclists alike and a wonderful opportunity to get out there and test yourself, while marveling at some of Vermont's beautiful country landscape.

←-----→
 We hope you will help us make this annual ride a tremendous success — either by participating in the ride itself, making a generous donation in support of other cyclists, or volunteering on the day of the event.

←-----→
 Help Vermont CARES celebrate its community and continue its commitment to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS.

BE A CHAMP — DO THE RIDE!

MAYAK graphics & design

Send me more information about Vermont CARES' Champ Ride '99
 800.649.2437

I am interested in:

Riding Building a Team Volunteering

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-Mail _____

✂ Clip and return to: VT CARES, PO Box 5248, Burlington, VT 05402 ✂

STONEHENGE TO STONEWALL

Or Gay History In A Nutshell

My Tent Is Your Tent, not My Tent or Yours?

BY CHARLES EMOND

Now we come to the Biblical biggie! The story of Sodom and Gomorrah is where we get our fancy words like "sodomy," "sodomite," and "sodomize."

Boswell comments that these words, from the Latin "sodomita," were applied to same-sex activity after preacher-type people decided that with the right spin, this story might just come in handy. "Here is God destroying two homosexual cities, so just say no!"

We didn't get any words from Gomorrah that I know of. Since nobody visits it in the Bible, we are left in the dark. (Maybe it was a "sister" city filled with lesbians or something exciting like that! Use your imagination here.)

At any rate, according to Genesis 18, Sodom and Gomorrah were cities with bad reputations. The Bible also refers to their pride, "fullness of bread and abundance of idleness" — think Las Vegas here!

So God decides to destroy the cities despite the pleas of Abraham not to do so.

Jehovah's Witnesses?

Before this destruction happens though, God sends two of his angels to check the place out.

When they arrive in Sodom, Lot is sitting by the gate. No, we don't have a clue why he is sitting there, he just is. (The Bible doesn't really answer all your questions, you know!)

When he sees these two fancy visitors, he latches right on, invites them to stay with him, and won't take 'no' for an answer. They claim that they would prefer to spend the night in the square. (Hey, he is talking to them with his face against the ground! Would you go home with this guy?) But Lot insists and they finally give in.

He brings them home and gives them supper. Before bedtime, all the men in the city surround the house and call to Lot to bring out the visitors "so that we may know them".

This phrase is the crux of the matter and it is interesting to note that the word "know" ("yadha" in Hebrew) means "to have thorough knowledge of."

Don't raise those eyebrows yet. It was actually rarely used in the so-called Biblical sense — even in the Bible. According to Boswell, it occurs 943 times in the Hebrew Bible, and only 10 of these occurrences refer to carnal knowledge!

It is also interesting to note that Lot is actually a resident alien in Sodom, perhaps unaware of local laws. The men might just have wanted to check out the visitor's credentials. But even if we do translate this to mean that they wanted to rape the two angels, we would have to join in condemnation, because, after all, any rape is wrong.

Take My Daughters! Please!

Getting back to our story, Lot goes out and says he won't bring out the angels, but instead he will send out his two virgin daughters for the crowd of men to have fun

with. We do not know how the two virgin daughters felt about this offer — but judging from their later actions they were probably putting on their party dresses!

So the men of Sodom press forward. Lot is dragged back inside and the angels work a bit of magic so that the men can't find the door. The two angels stay the night and then try to take Lot and his family with them before the city is destroyed.

Lot just barely gets out with the two virgin daughters; his wife is turned into a pillar of salt. (Don't ask.) Then, a bit later (Genesis 19:31), both of his daughters get him drunk, have sex with him and become pregnant with his sons! (Are the writers of "As the World Turns" taking notes here?)

Maybe They Were From Welcome Wagon

Is the story really about homosexuality? Probably not.

Firstly, God had already decided to destroy the city before this angel business, not because of it.

More importantly, if the men of Sodom were all gay, why did Lot, who should have noticed this fact while hanging around in the square, offer his virgin daughters to them? Did they both need to have their hair done, or what?

The truth is that his story revolves around a lack of hospitality. Hospitality to strangers is highly regarded and crucially important in desert countries because human survival often depends on it.

Lot was trying to be hospitable to strangers and the Sodomites were causing a ruckus about it. None of the other references in scripture — for example a very similar story of the town of Gibeah in Judges 19:22 — are connected with homosexuality.

This interpretation is also supported by a very good authority, one Jesus Christ. He refers to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:14-15) in the middle of a discourse on hospitality or the lack thereof in the towns where His disciples are headed. Hey, you can't argue with Him!

Next time: David and Jonathan get married!

For more information on the subject of Christianity and Homosexuality, get *The Church and the Homosexual* by John J. McNeill. This is a "courageous" classic treatise on the history of Christianity as it relates to gay people. McNeill, a Jesuit priest at the time he wrote it, was expelled from the order for his views. ▼

Charlie Emond has a bachelor's degree from Queens College and master's degrees from both Dartmouth and Keene State. He teaches college history courses in Springfield, including a course he developed: Hidden History: Homosexuality in Western Civilization.