

SEARCHING FOR A CITY

“For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10.)

Many years ago Betty and I stopped by the home of a friend on Sunday night. He was a college professor with an earned PhD. In addition to his secular expertise, he also was a Bible College graduate with a remarkable knowledge of the Scriptures. Though he normally did not go to church on Sunday night he sensed that we wanted to go and graciously took us to a local fellowship.

I do not know why this dear brother did not regularly attend services on Sunday night, but I sensed that the level of worship was beneath him. He was smarter and more knowledgeable than the preacher. Had someone with greater skill or intelligence been speaking he might have driven many miles to share in the experience. Just an “ordinary” church service, however, didn’t seem to interest him. Don’t forget this story, for we will return to it in a moment.

Abraham lived in the city of Ur in Chaldea. (Gen. 11:31.) This area is generally considered the “Cradle of the Human Race.” Eden was in this area (Gen. 2:10-14.) It is here we find the oldest cities and the oldest libraries. They were leaders in architecture and science. I am told that their cities not only featured towering rampart walls, but also running water and many other comforts of life. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon, for example, were said to be air conditioned. Streams of water were diverted over the windows and the wind carried the cool air throughout the castle. Those cities, which once seemed so secure, are now a heap of dust and rubble.

Note that Abraham left that city made by man in search of a city whose builder and maker was God. It was a bold and revolutionary decision based upon faith. Faith, you recall, is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Abraham gave up something he could see for something he could not see. He became a wandering nomad. He dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob. He left behind the scientific advancement and comfort of Chaldea for the rugged and austere life of a wandering shepherd. There was, however, a purpose to his sacrificial life style. He was searching for the City of God.

Now let us return to our own generation and the subject of Christian worship. In our consumer driven society we “shop” for a church much like we shop for everything else. Many are looking for a place that is convenient with attractive facilities. Many prefer a professional speaker who is easy to listen to, and perhaps even entertaining. We may also desire a fast paced “service” that is punctual and predictable. I fear that much of what we are looking for is what Abraham left behind.

Abraham died almost 2,000 years before the City of God became a reality. Jesus said it like this: **“Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56.)** That which was said of Abraham was also true of all the other faithful people who lived and died before Christ came into the world. **“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” (Heb 11:13.)**

I doubt that Abraham would have been impressed by stately buildings or anything that was physical. He was searching for a spiritual city. What he was searching for, true Christians have found. It doesn’t matter what kind of a building we worship in, or who does the speaking, We are come unto **“mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” (Heb 12:22-24.)**

May God help each of us to turn our backs upon the world and enjoy that city for which Abraham was searching!