

CITIES

“Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch” (Gen. 4:17)

This is the first time the word “city” is found in the Bible. The Hebrew word for “city” is “aw-yar”. It comes from the root “oor” which means to “open the eyes”. Hence Strong in his *Exhaustive Concordance* defines “city” as “a place guarded by waking or watch.”

Remember that before building a city, Cain had just murdered his brother. His punishment from God was two fold.

- **“When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you” (Gen. 4:12).**
- **“You will be a restless wanderer on the earth” (Gen. 4:12).**

“Cain said to the Lord, ‘my punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me’” (Gen. 4:13,14).

“But the Lord said to him, ‘Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over’ Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. So Cain went out from the Lord’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden”.

“Cain lay with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch” (Gen. 4:17).

Now let us review:

- Cain killed his brother.
- God punished Cain by cursing the ground.
- God also condemned Cain to be a wanderer.
- Cain feared that anyone who found him will kill him.
- God said “not so”, and put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him.
- Cain had a son and named him Enoch.
- Cain built the world’s first city and named it after his son Enoch.
- Cain therefore did not wander as God commanded but built his own city and lived in it.
- **THUS, THE FIRST CITY WAS BUILT AS AN AN ACT OF REBELLION AGAINST GOD!**
- **CAIN REFUSED TO WANDER AS GOD WANTED. HE DELIBERATELY DECIDED TO STAY IN ONE PLACE. THAT’S WHY HE BUILT THE CITY.**
- **CAIN DIDN’T TRUST GOD TO PROTECT HIM, BUT FORCED SOMOME ELSE “TO WATCH” FOR HIM.**
- **REMEMBER! THE WORD “CITY” LITERALLY MEANS “A PLACE GUARDED BY WAKING OR WATCH”.**
- **JUST AS CAIN DOMINATED HIS BROTHER ABEL, WE MAY SAFELY ASSUME THAT HE ALSO DOMINATED THE PEOPLE IN HIS OWN CITY.**
- **WE REPEAT! THE FIRST CITY WAS BUILT BY CAIN AS AN ACT OF DEFIANCE AND REBELLION AGAINST GOD!**

NIMROD

The next use of the word “city” in the Bible is in Genesis 10:12 and is associated with Nimrod. Nimrod was a mighty warrior on the earth. **“The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar. From that land he went to Assyria, where he build Nineveh, Rehoboth, Ir, Calah, and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city” (Gen. 10:10-12).**

None of these cities were godly. Babylon, for example, was infamous. In fact, Babylon is described in the book of Revelation as the “mother of prostitutes” (Rev. 17:5). Nimrod, like Cain, was a powerful man who dominated others. The cities he founded were not godly.

BABEL

The next use of the word “city” in the Bible is in Genesis 11. When God created man He commanded him: **“Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28).** After the flood, however, mankind again rebelled. Like Cain, they decided to do exactly the opposite of what God wanted. Instead of filling the earth **“They said, ‘come let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens so that we make may a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:4).**

God, as you recall, confounded their languages, scattered them, and they stopped building the city (Gen. 11:8).

SODOM

The next use of the word “city” is with reference to Sodom (Gen. 18:24, 26, 28). The story of Sodom is so well known that it is not necessary to dwell on the wickedness of the city, or it’s complete destruction by God. Suffice it to say that if there had only been ten righteous people in Sodom it would not have been destroyed (Gen. 18:32). Sadly, only four righteous people were found. They were Lot, his wife, and his two daughters. Unfortunately, Lot’s wife then disobeyed God, looked back, and was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26). Interestingly, she is the only woman in the Bible that we are commanded to remember (Lk. 17:32).

ABRAHAM AND LOT

Abraham lived in Ur of Chaldea which was one of the greatest cities of his day (Gen. 11:27-31). Unfortunately it was filled with idolatry. Even Abraham’s family were idolators (Josh. 24:2-4). Therefore God called Abraham out of the city to dwell in tents. By faith Abraham obeyed God and went out, not knowing where he was going, but was looking forward to a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:8-10). Abraham was true to his calling. He never founded a city like Cain or Nimrod, but lived in tents until the day of his death.

Lot, by contrast, pitched his tent toward Sodom (Gen. 13:12). Soon he was living in Sodom. Lot had even taken a seat at the gate with those who ruled the city (Gen. 19:1ff.). When fleeing from Sodom Lot didn’t want to live outside of a city and begged to live in Zoar (Gen. 19:18-26).

It seems that like Cain, Lot didn't trust God to protect him but preferred to place his trust in a city.

SALEM AND THE JEBUSITES

The city of Salem, as you probably know, was later called Jerusalem. During the days of Abraham it was a good city ruled by Melchizedek. Melchizedek was not only the King of Salem but also the priest of the Most High God (Gen. 14:18-20). Abraham paid tithes to him and we are told that the priesthood of Jesus was like like that of Melchizedek. His priesthood was superior to the priesthood of Aaron because Levi was in the loins of Abraham when he paid tithes to Melchizedek (Heb. 7:1-21). Something bad, however, happened to Salem and it drifted into idolatry.

We know this because when Joshua began the conquest of Canaan some 500 years later, Jerusalem was filled with idolatry and ruled by the Jebusites (Deut. 20:17,18). They were so powerful that Judah could not dislodge them (Josh; 15:63). Neither could the Benjamites (Jud. 1:21). The Jebusites were so powerful that when King David attacked them they bragged that even the blind and the lame could easily defend their city (2 Sam. 5:6).

They were wrong! David did ultimately defeat the Jebusites and the city of Jerusalem became known as the "City of David" (2 Sam. 5:9).

The point is that when God is forgotten even good cities become bad.

THE CITY MOUSE AND THE COUNTRY MOUSE

Aesop's Fables are a collection of parables believed to have originated with a slave in ancient Greece between 620 and 564 B.C. One of those fables involves a city mouse who visited his cousin in the country. The city mouse scoffed at the crude life in the country and invited his cousin to the lavish life and rich foods in the city. As they were eating in the city, however, a couple of dogs attacked and the terrified rodents barely escaped with their lives. The country mouse decided to go back home. He preferred safety in the country to opulence in the city. The essence of the story resonates with so many that it resurfaces over and over in a variety of cultures. The Greek version was by Babrius. The Anglo-Norman version was by Walter of England. The Spanish version was by Juan Ruiz. Marcus Aurelius alludes to it in his *Meditations*. Sir Thomas Wyatt made it into a song. In 1927 the story was made into a French silent film. In 1980 it was adapted by Evelyn Lambart for the National Film Board of Canada. In 1993 HBO produced *The Country Mouse and the City Mouse – a Christmas Tale* which eventually led to the TV series *The Country Mouse and the City Mouse Adventures*. The point is well taken that compared with the country, cities are cess pools of crime.

Here are the number of people murdered in 2018 in the following cities: Tijuana, Mexico 2,640 - Caracas, Venezuela 2,980 – Fortaleza, Brazil 2,724 – Cape Town, South Africa 2,868 – Guatemala City, Guatemala 1,411, etc.

Here are the top five crime cities in the United States. These statistics rate the number of annual violent crimes per 100,000 people: St. Louis – 1817.1; Detroit – 1,759.6; Memphis – 1,740.1; Milwaukee – 1,596.1; Baltimore – 1,539.9.

The frustration of trying to eliminate crime in the city is illustrated by the fact that crime is even rampant in prisons. Even though prisoners are in a controlled environment, behind bars, with security cameras, they still get drugs and commit virtually every other crime from petty theft to murder. If the police cannot make prisons crime free, they obviously cannot make cities crime free either.

No wonder the country mouse wanted to go back home to the country!

PAUL PREACHED IN CITIES

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Lk. 19:10). If cities are filled with lost people it is obvious that Jesus will send somebody to lead them to salvation. As members of the Body of Christ each one must do what the Head of the Body directs us to do. We should not be surprised, therefore, that Jesus led Paul to preach in the cities.

Christ commanded the apostles to go into all the world (Matt. 28:18-20). He commanded them to preach to all of creation (Mk. 16:15). Some of us, however, he wants to stay home and preach. Remember that when Jesus healed the demoniac He commanded him to **“return home and tell how much God has done for you” (Lk. 8:39)**. Each of us must do what God leads us to do. God led Paul to Rome (Rom. 1:11); but he led Philip to a deserted road between Jerusalem and Gaza (Acts 8:26). The Spirit forbade Paul to preach in Asia and Bithynia (Acts 16:6,7) but called him to preach in Macedonia (Acts 16:9). Every child of God must obey God for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God (Rom. 8:14). In this regard the Apostle Paul was consistently called to preach in cities.

In Paul’s day Corinth was one of the most wicked cities in the world. They worshipped Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and 1,000 prostitutes dedicated their bodies to her worship. To “Corinthianize” was to live a sinful and debauched life. When Paul became discouraged at Corinth: **“One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you because I have many people in this city’” (Acts 18:9, 10)**.

Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia and also was the center of the worship of Diana. Her worshipers believed her to be the mother goddess of the earth. Her temple in Ephesus was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Worshipping her also involved ceremonial prostitution. Yet Paul had great success while preaching in Ephesus. In only two short years all the Jews and Greeks in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord (Acts 19:10).

When Paul came to Rome one out of every three people in Italy were slaves. One out of five were slaves throughout the Roman Empire. Rome was a sinful city famous for pornography, lewdness, infanticide, and death for sport. Yet Paul longed to go to Rome that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift (Rom. 1:11). Their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world (Rom. 1:8).

We must preach wherever God leads us to preach, even if it is the city!

POPULATION GROWTH

- When Jesus was on the earth the population of the world was around 250,000,000.

- In 1,800 it was 1 billion.
- In 1,960 it was 3 billion.
- In 1,999 it was 6 billion.
- In 2019 the world population is 7.7 billion and growing.
- There was a time when most people lived in the country.
- At the present time, however, about 50% of the world's population live in cities.
- By 2050 it is believed that 66% of the world's population will live in cities.
- When Jesus was on earth Rome was the biggest city on earth with an estimated population of 800,000.
- Today Worldatlas.com lists Tokyo, Japan as the world's largest city with a population of 38,001,000.
- The population of the entire continent of Australia in 2019 was 19.97 million, or about half the population of Tokyo.
- If we are seeking the lost we will obviously preach in cities.

Facing this reality will cause us to develop a different strategy than is often used in small towns and rural areas. You cannot buy enough property and build enough church buildings in Tokyo to accommodate 38 million people.

THE HOLY CITY, THE NEW JERUSALEM

Abraham was searching for a city whose Builder and Maker was God. Our goal is also to someday live in the Holy City God is preparing.

John the Apostle had this vision while a prisoner on the Island of Patmos: **“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (Rev. 21:1,2).**

In this “holy” city there will be no need of police for: **“Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27).**

The secret of this sinless city involves the transformation of sinners to be like Jesus. Since everyone will be like Jesus there will be no need of policemen or law! There will be nothing to fear and therefore the gates of the city will never be shut! Everybody in this holy city will be free to come and go and do anything they want to do. The reason nobody sins is that nobody wants to. Everyone there will be like Jesus Whose only desire was to please God. These are the only kind of people whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Our lowly bodies will be like his glorious body (Phil. 3:21). Our minds will be like His mind! We know that when Jesus comes again we will be like Him for we will see Him as He is (1 Jn. 3:2). The fact that there will be no night, no sorrow, no pain, and no tears only hastens the day when we will enjoy the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwells righteousness (2 Pet. 3:11-13)

“So then, dear friends, since you are look forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with Him (2 Pet 3:14).

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