

**From The Garden To The City**  
**Wilson L. Thompson, Ph.D.**

*By faith [Abraham] sojourned in the land of promise . . . dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*  
*Hebrews Chapter Eleven*

Since Adam fell (failed) in management of Eden's garden, man's work has been burdened with deadly sin and weeds (Genesis 3:17-19). The first city was called Enoch, after the son of Cain who murdered Abel. Thereafter, urban culture degenerated until "every imagination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). Finally, God "spared not the old world, but saved Noah, . . . a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood . . . Whereby the world, . . . being overflowed with water, perished" (II Peter 2:5; 3:6).

Like Adam, Noah was commanded to "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 9:1). Contrarywise, idolatrous men reared up the city of Babel and its tower "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4). God halted this urban idolatry by confusing their language. These urban rebels perforce resumed their ordained work of settling the rest of the earth, when their language was confounded so they could "not understand one another's speech" (Genesis 11:7). Their scattered cities, however, were filled with idolatrous worship.

Then, God called Abraham out of the idolatry of Ur of the Chaldees. "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee" (Genesis 12:1). The nomadic pilgrimage of Abraham's household into Canaan was sustained by his large herds and herdsmen. In Canaan, Abraham and his servant-saints lived largely in tents apart from the idolatry of Canaanite cities. Later, in Egypt, Israelite shepherds were similarly insulated from idolatry by ethnic prejudice that "every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians" (Genesis 46:34). Further, Israel was sequestered in the Land of Goshen.

Abraham's nephew, Lot, however, "pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly" (Genesis 13:12-13). He then moved into Sodom and was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked" (II Peter 2:7). Finally, Lot lost all his household, but two daughters when "the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire . . . out of heaven" (Genesis 19:24).

During the Exodus, with Israelites lusting for flesh to eat, Moses wondered whether it would be necessary that "the flocks and the herds be slain" to suffice Israel (Numbers 11:22). After successful occupation of the Promised Land, animal husbandry remained a principal domestic industry in Israel, with tents used as domiciles when necessary. After Saul and Jonathan were killed at Mt. Gilboa, Israel then "forsook their cities, [for tents] and the Philistines came and dwelt in them" (I Chronicles 10:7). When coronation talks with Rehoboam broke down the ten northern tribes rebelled with the cry "to your tents, O Israel" (I Kings 12:16).

Sadly, cities - even in Israel - tended to degenerate into flagrant sin. When there was no king in Israel, tolerance of homosexuals in Gibeah led to a brutal gang rape and killing of a Levites's concubine (Judges 19:12-30). This, in turn, provoked a civil war that almost annihilated the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 20:1-48). Later, even Jerusalem, troubled by inflation and oppressive taxation (II Chronicles 9:20; I Kings 12:3-4), had chapels, built for Solomon's wives, to worship power and sex gods, with attendant infant sacrifice (I Kings 11:1-10).

Yet, in the midst of sinful "choose-death" cities, God's people, moved by the Holy Spirit, historically have successfully found ways to Choose Life (Deuteronomy 30:19). Indeed, it was in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost that 3,000 became Christian in response to Peter's urging "Repent, and be baptized . . . For the promise is unto you, and to your children . . . even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38-39).

**This dynamic Church, despite their modest means started a meals ministry for widows deprived of family support due them by the hypocritical Pharisees' practice of Corban, denounced by Jesus (Mark 7:9-13; Acts 6:1-6).**

**Paul's missions established churches in urban centers of the Roman Empire. As Paul still urges "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). Despite deadly urban problems, Christians within modern cities remain witnesses to life, beacons of hope like cities set on a hill (Matthew 5:14-16). God's people "look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter 3:13). We envision a new Jerusalem where there is "no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4). Amen and Amen!**