**VOLUME 5; CHAPTER 12 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP: THE SEARCH FOR THE CITY by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come.*

*Hebrews 13:14*

ON SUNDAY EVENING LAST WE TOOK THE FIRST PART OF THIS verse, "We have not here an abiding city." This evening our subject is the second part, "We seek after the city which is to come."

The "We" of the writer refers to the men of faith, those who live by faith in God, those who share the vision of the ultimate victory of God in human history.

The declaration occurs in the letter which is pre-eminently intended to warn the men of faith against the perils of apostasy; the letter in which no specific sin is dealt with, but from the beginning to the end of which the one all-inclusive sin of unbelief is the only sin in the mind of the writer; the letter that perhaps in some ways more wonderfully than any other writing in the Bible sets before us the movements of the Divine economy, and shows how they all center in the Son of God; the letter which opens with the magnificent thunder that announces the fact of God, and proceeds immediately to the all-inclusive declaration that the God of the universe has not left men without witness and without testimony, "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son"; the letter that from that first and wonderful declaration proceeds to show that the speech of the Son is superior to all preceding it and absolutely final; superior to that ministry of angels whereby the ancient economy was initiated; superior to the great leaders of men, to Moses who led the people out and could not lead them in, to Joshua, who led them in but could not give them rest; superior as Priest, abiding forever, Priest in the power of an endless life; superior as the File-leader of the men of faith, going first in the great procession, taking precedence over all others by reason of the clearness of His vision of the ultimate issue, and by reason of the splendor of His devotion to the process of travail and pain by which the triumph will come.

It is in this letter that the writer says, speaking of faithful souls, adventurers upon the great highway, those who have seen the promise but never yet have realized it, "We have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come."

Our Bible opens with a garden; it closes with a city; and the garden and the city are alike of earth. The final vision is that of Jerusalem - not heaven, but coming down out of heaven to earth, as a bride adorned for her husband; and the great anthem that celebrates the coming of the City is "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men and He shall dwell with them," Between the garden and the ultimate city, we find all the tragedy of human sin, human failure, human inability; and all the magnificent processes of God's government, forever moving, to our seeming with great slowness, but with infinite sureness, toward the ultimate goal of the establishment in this world of His own Kingdom, and the realization of His own purpose among the sons of men. Between that garden and that city, there is a long succession of pilgrims of faith, visionary souls, fanatics in the thinking of the men among whom they lived, leaving earthly cities to seek one they saw, but no other saw; abandoning the values of the passing and perishing, because convinced of the values of the eternal and permanent. Abraham leaving Ur of the Chaldees to seek a city of heaven that lies beyond, to establish a heavenly order in the world, until at last in those wonderful hours when the seer of blue Galilee beheld the ultimate things of the processes of God in the affairs of men, he saw Jerusalem from on high coming out of heaven, and the mystic glory of the established Kingdom flamed before him. If we are of the number of those who see that vision, and hope for that result, who believe that the victory must be won, then we are of the number of those who have to say, "We have not here an abiding city."

What then shall we do? We are men and women who by God's good grace are men and women of vision, who see the ultimate; and understand that the supreme words descriptive of the ultimate are words made precious to us by the ministry of our Lord; men and women who understand, that at last, in the established Kingdom of God and city of God, love will be the all-inclusive reason for activity, light the sufficient intelligence that men may not stumble, and life the energy equal to obedience to love in the power of light.

What shall we do? Shall we wait for the city that is to be, in the sense of selfishly desiring it? That were to deny our Christianity. Then shall we have conventions and conferences and gather ourselves together for the deepening of our own spiritual life, and in order to sing about the heaven to which we shall go when we have done with the bearing of burdens? That were to unfit us for heaven, and demonstrate our unworthiness to enter in. Shall we retire from all the busy activities of the great cities of the world, and shut ourselves within stone walls, and give ourselves to meditation and prayer? That were to miss the very purpose of our life in Christ; that were to cut the nerve of prayer, for men can only pray for the world's woe and wounds as they live near to them, and enter into constant comradeship with them. What then shall we do, for here we have no continuing city?

"We seek after the city which is to come." "We seek!" If I could only fasten that one word, so old and so familiar that it has almost lost its power of appeal, upon mind and heart and conscience, I should thank God for the opportunity given me. Seek! Did the writer of this letter mean that we are to be looking for the heaven that lies beyond? Surely not; for death is the way to that, unless our Lord shall come to gather us to that great and spacious life which lies beyond. That is not the thought at all. That is not the argument of the writer. That is not the master passion that moved pilgrims of faith in the past. Reverently, let me declare it, knowing I am touching upon supreme and superlative things, that was not the master passion that sent our Lord with face set toward Jerusalem, the faltering, falling city. What then does the writer mean? Does he suggest that we should look for some unknown earthly land where we may build this city; that we are to seek some Eldorado? That, my brethren, were in itself of the essence of selfishness. Wherever men have attempted to find some tract of country hitherto unoccupied, in order there to build a new state, a new city, the result has been the condemnation of the method, for the impulse behind such activity is merely that of finding a safe city into which the privileged may gather, and be free from the stress and strain of all the things of conflict. You cannot find me any settlement of men which has attempted to escape from the burden and battle of the actuality of life in city, village, or town, that has ever justified its own aim or object or been a success; for God lays upon all selfish endeavor the paralysis of His disapproving touch.

The word "seek" has occurred before in our hour of worship. We heard it from the lips of our Lord in the midst of that great Manifesto of the King, wherein everything as I full well know and would perpetually enforce, was spoken to His own disciples and not to the mixed multitudes. To them He said, "Seek ye first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." In that wonderful passage, in which He revealed to men so much of the Father heart of God, showing that God cares for the flowers and the birds that have no ability to think and plan and arrange, and argues that He will therefore much more clothe and feed those to whom He has given the ability to think and plan and arrange; that passage in which He shows the unutterable folly of the man who sets his heart wholly upon treasures that are of the dust, and with a fine touch of sarcasm, mingled with pity, reminds men that moth and rust consume, and thieves break through and steal; that wonderful passage in which He puts into contrast in a way that surprises us the more, the more we study it, with its revelation of His perfect understanding of human nature and the tragedy of human sin, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon"; in that passage we hear Him say, "Seek ye first His Kingdom and His righteousness."

The particular word made use of by the writer of the letter to the Hebrews is an emphasized form of this word which our Lord used. It suggests strong passionate desire, accompanied by earnest effort in the direction of the desire. Seek; not merely gazing, in the hope that we may see; not merely superficially looking for, and expecting; but seek. "We seek after the city which is to come.

The thought suggested is not merely that of looking to see if we can find a city built; it is that of fellowship in the process of building the city. We do not merely turn our back upon Ur of the Chaldees, and go wandering forth in the hope that somewhere, sometime, we may discover a city in which the principles of righteousness and truth may obtain; but we turn our back upon Ur of the Chaldees, in order to seek the righteousness of God and His Kingdom, in the establishment of that Kingdom, and the building of that city.

I am not now entering into any discussion as to whether or not there may not be an opening heaven, and the actual descending of a city. I am not Sadducean enough to deny these things. I believe there will be startling surprises when at the crisis of His Advent our Lord will bring all things into subjection to Himself.

I am speaking now, however, of the present responsibility of pilgrims who have no continuing city. As we look back over the long line of heroes and heroines of faith described for us in this letter; or as coming away, from them, we track the footway of others through the centuries since the time of our Lord Himself, we find that these men of the pilgrim character, these men and women who found in the cities of earth no permanent resting place, became pilgrims with tent and altar, and sought a city of God by exerting in the cities of men those influences which were possible to them by their comradeship with Christ Himself.

The nature of the seeking is suggested by the words, "The city which is to come." Not the city to which we go, but the city which God is building, and between the building of which by God and the seeking for which by His people, there is the most intimate relationship.

From these most general statements as to the meaning of the text, let us turn to practical application. How can we help toward the establishment of this Kingdom and the building of this city of God? First, by inward and personal realization of the principles of this Kingdom. The citizen of London, who is a Christian man, will help toward the building of the city of God, first by absolute personal abandonment of himself to the Lordship of Christ, by recognizing that Christ is infinitely more to him than an ethical teacher, infinitely more than a great pattern of human life, infinitely more than a Saviour from the punishment of sin and from sin itself.

All this is He, this Lord Christ of ours; ethical Teacher, speaking as men never spake, with a severity so terrible that even today I cannot read the words of His ethical requirement without trembling; perfect Pattern for human life, so that the nearer I come to Him the more I recognize the distance between Himself and myself, perfect Saviour, so that I know in the deepest of me that He has pardoned my sin.

But He must be more than all this to us; He must be Lord and Master of our lives. If I have received from Him the gifts that He bestows, and render to Him absolute obedience, I can co-operate with Him in the building of the city of God, in the bringing in of the Kingdom of God into the world. Everything else will follow when that first principle is realized and yielded to; but nothing else will follow until it is so. There can be no larger seeking for the Kingdom of God until the Kingdom of God has come in our own lives. In other words, we cannot divorce private and public life, and declare that a man can be an influence and instrument for the establishment of the Kingdom of God, if in his own life he is impure. I can strike no blow against the powers of darkness which will tell, if I am allowing them to hold high revel within the citadel of my own personality. In beginning to build the city of God, I make my contribution, first and fundamentally, when I see to it that all my own life is under the Lordship of God's anointed and appointed King.

When that is granted, what next? The search for the city of God within the cities of men is first the result of the presence within those cities of pilgrims of faith who can find no abiding place within. "Ye are the salt of the earth; ye are the light of the world." Salt has no power to change corruption into incorruption. Salt has power to stay the spread of corruption. Salt is aseptic rather than antiseptic. In this great city of London we seek for the city of God as we are true to the life which our Lord has communicated to us, and as salt, purify, preserve, and give to goodness its opportunity. I am particularly anxious that this principle should be recognized by young men and women who name the name of Christ, and have seen the vision of the city, and desire to help in the search for it. You are salt of the earth, your life absolutely yielded to Jesus Christ, in the office, in the warehouse, in the college, wherever you may be, is a life that makes difficult the spread of impurity, that gives a chance to the aspiration after God that is born in the heart of the young man at your side.

Light; I do not think our Lord used His figures carelessly when, illustrating His own word, He said, "A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house." The city on the hill is for the illumination of vast expanses. The lamp in the house is for the irradiation of private places. Wherever these pilgrims of faith live with their tent and altar; pilgrims, ever ready to be disturbed; men of faith, never disturbed in the midst of disturbance; there is the light, revealing God to men, by revealing all that life means when men have found the Kingdom of God and have entered into it for themselves. By such living we make contribution to the coming of the Kingdom. By such living we seek for the Kingdom of God; and only by such living.

Why was it that Lot did not save Sodom? He could not help Sodom because Sodom knew that his motive for living there was selfish; that of gaining, getting. So also the Christian man, when London knows he is simply in the city for his own selfish gain, is unable to influence London for God. Unless London can discover beneath the legitimate exercises of life the passion for righteousness and truth; beneath all the activities of the passing days, the search for the Kingdom; that man has cut the nerve of his own endeavor. We seek for the city of God as we live the life of loyalty in the cities of men.

But further. There can be no such life that will not find opportunities for definite activity. The basis of all our activity must be love and light; not as though they were two things; they are but the two sides of the one great experience of fellowship in the life of the Son of God. God is love; it is an all-inclusive word. God is light; it is an all-inclusive word. They are not mutually destructive. They reveal the two qualities of the essential life of God. Love and light, passion and principle merging forever more in great and awful purity. In the proportion in which men are living that life of fellowship with God in the city, there will be activity, and it is only activity which proceeds from that inspiration and is governed forever more thereby that is powerful. The reason of all that we do if we would help must be love; and the method must be light. Our activity must be love inspired, but it must be light instructed. Love which is mere sickly, sentimental, humanitarianism, may destroy instead of building. Unless the love we feel for men is love illuminated by the awful purity of God that insists upon His holiness as well as His mercy, we cannot help men. Rose water is no medicine for the malady of sin. We never can understand love until we realize what it means, in the presence of the awful, brutal Cross of Christ which is His insistence upon holiness, and upon love. These are the things which are to master our activities if we are to seek the city of God. Alas, that we so often blunder into some selfish kind of desire to help men, forgetting these things! Take up the New Testament and see how these writers never forgot to relate the truths of every-day life with the fundamental truths of holy religion, "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church." Thus in one brief, burning sentence, home is saved and sanctified, and the flaming sword of the Divine anger is against all attempts to loosen the divorce laws of the country. If we seek the city by the revelation of God and of man, and the interrelationship between them in our own lives, and thereby actual, positive endeavor inspired by love and light, which are of the essence of the life of God, we shall help toward the coming of the city.

Love will be angry in the presence of sin, in the presence of all oppression, in the presence of everything in our own city which is opposed to the city of God. Love is of the very essence of anger, Someone has said during recent years in writing of one of those old Hebrew prophets that the severity of the opening part of the book makes it impossible to imagine that the tenderness of the latter part was written by the same pen; that the man whose attitude was characterized by awful thunder could ever have merged into the infinite love song that describes Jehovah as singing over His people and resting in His love. That opinion is not true to the revelation of God. It is the severity of God which demonstrates His goodness. It is the goodness of God which creates His severity. It is the son of thunder who becomes the apostle of love. If we would help to build the city of God, we shall need the driving rage of a great anger. Do not forget that when Paul, the great embodiment of the Christian temper, came to Athens he was in a paroxysm, his spirit was provoked within him.

Our contribution toward the building of the city of God will be a great anger against sin and all that is opposed to the will of God; but it will become a great tenderness toward the sinner. These are the things of which a man cannot speak; he can feel them though he cannot say them. Anger with sin, but tenderness with the sinner; that is the Christian mystery. We caught her in the very act! What will you, pure Teacher, say to this woman taken in adultery? What did He say? He looked at them and said, "Let the man that is without sin, cast the first stone," And when they had filed out, single file, He said to her, "Where are thine accusers gone; did no man condemn thee?" "No man, Lord." "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more."

Do you think by that word He condoned adultery? You know He did not. His fierce and awful word abides forevermore, the most fierce and flaming thing ever said against adultery; but for the woman taken in the very act, He had a great compassion and a great pity. O God, that I may be a man something like that, fiery, angry with sin; forever patient with the sinner. So the city will be built; so the Kingdom will be prepared for the coming of the King.

Where shall we begin? At home. We need that word in England today. At home. Oh the perils threatening us! The first of them is the break-up of home life, the failure of Christian men and women to maintain home life. Let us begin there. You can have a city of God where you live. Your house can be the city of God. The amount of the rent does not matter. The kind of furniture does not enter into the calculation. Your house can be the city of God. On thirty shillings a week, someone says? Yes, if that is your income. Your Father knows you have need of these things, and if you really needed more He would give you more. Remember, He has only promised you sustenance. Your bread and your water shall be sure. Home with Jesus King, and the law of His light forevermore recognized, and the law of His love forevermore yielded to is the city of God.

There is nothing this land of ours needs more than the multiplication of Christian homes; and the Christian home is not a home that bolts its door when all its own members are in, and excludes all others. The Christian home will leave its door upon the latch and welcome the homeless - and there are hundreds of them in London who for lack of a home which will give them, not charity and patronage, but home life, are drifting away. Let your home be God's city.

Then the Church, that must be God's city. The Church, a hospital for all spiritual malady and disease, a nursing home for all the weak ones; a barracks into which men shall be brought to be trained for fighting; a base of operations from which the army shall march, terrible with banners against the things that oppose. That also is the city of God.

If we begin at home, and continue in the Church, then where next? In your office tomorrow morning. If you are a member of Parliament, in the House, and God hasten the day when it may be true - I say it because it is on my heart - that not at the beck and call of any party whip, but under the control of the Lord Christ, men shall speak for Him and be true to Him in Parliament.

In other words, begin to build the city of God where you are. Do not sit down and sigh, wishing that you might be somewhere else, in order that you might help. You can help where you are. George Herbert's philosophy is the philosophy we need to understand, that it is possible to sweep a room and make that and the action fine; and the maid in the house of her mistress tomorrow, who after this service will do that sweeping a little better for Christ's sake, is as surely helping to bring in the Kingdom of God as is the preacher in the pulpit here or anywhere.

This is Christian citizenship. This is seeking for God's city, and this outlook and conception will correct many popular fallacies such as that the Christian Church should catch the spirit of the age. A thousand times No! The business of the Christian Church is to correct the spirit of the age. Or that more manifest fallacy that when you are in Rome you should do as Rome does. Nothing of the kind. When you are in Rome do right though you violate all the conventionalities! Then there is that most devilish of all fallacies: It is no use, we must let things alone! That is what the devil wants us to do. That is what the devil said to Jesus; "Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee?" Our answer must be His answer, "Come out"; and in His name we are to be out upon the great campaign. Pilgrim of faith, soldier art thou, builder art thou!

Thine to work as well as pray,

Clearing thorny wrongs away;

Plucking up the weeds of sin,

Letting heaven's warm sunshine in.

Watching on the hills of faith,

Listening what the Spirit saith,

Of the dim-seem light afar,

Growing like a nearing star.

God's interpreter art thou,

To the waiting ones below;

'Twixt them and its light midway

Heralding the better day -

Catching gleams of temple spires,

Hearing notes of angel choirs,

Where, as yet unseen of them,

Comes the new Jerusalem!

Like the Seer of Patmos gazing,

On the glory downward blazing;

Till upon earth's grateful sod,

Rests the city of our God."

May we be builders with Him, as well as warriors and pilgrims.