**VOLUME 5; CHAPTER 13 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP: THE BUILDING OF THE CITY by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*The city which hath the foundations, Whose Builder and Maker is God.*

*Hebrews 11:10*

THIS IS NOW THE THIRD SUNDAY EVENING THAT WE HAVE turned to the subject of Christian citizenship.

Speaking on the first evening from the words occurring in this same letter, "We have not here an abiding city," we considered the reason why men of faith have always had to make that affirmation; and have to make it still. The cities of men are cities in which the principle of selfishness is the master principle; and the law of life is that of the survival of the strongest; and the character of the citizens is to a large extent that of sordidness. The pilgrims of faith are those who have entered into life by self-death; who believe not only in the survival of the fittest - in that - but also in the possibility of the salvation of the most unfit; and whose law of life is that of sacrifice. Therefore, such can find no abiding city in the world.

We then considered the true attitude of the pilgrims of faith toward the cities of men. While it is true that "we have not here an abiding city," this also ought to be true concerning us, "We seek after the city which is to come"; not by gazing at the stars and waiting for the coming of a city; not by seclusion from the ordinary and everyday life of these cities of men; but by first seeing the vision of the ultimate purpose of God, and then by the response of life to all that vision means, the realization within the individual experience of the principles of the Divine Kingdom; and finally by earnest, actual, persistent effort in harmony with these things.

Now all this has seemed to be most excellent; but we are constrained to say: What of the chaos and misery in the midst of which we live? What of the sad habit of the Christian Church of withdrawing itself from the great centers of the life of the city? Or, what - and this is perhaps the question which overwhelms us most often - after all can be the value of our small contribution toward the building of the city of God and the bringing in of His Kingdom?

The answer to all these suggestions is contained within the compass of our text, "The city which hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." We shall surely be depressed and overwhelmed unless we learn the lesson which is crystallized into this declaration of the writer of this letter, that the Builder and Maker of the city is God. If that fact do but take possession of our hearts then we shall be content to live out our little day in the midst of the scaffolding, seeming to see very little of the beauty of the city, yet knowing that the plan is in His mind, He is the Architect; that the power is in Himself, He is the Framer; and that, therefore, at last the city must be built.

Let us remember as we come to this consideration, that the material city is but the shell containing the city itself. As today we speak of a school and think of the building, and yet know that the building is not the school; as today we speak of a club, and look upon the building, but know that the club is not the building; or finally as today we speak of a church and think of the building in which we gather, but know that the church is not the building; so let us remember when we speak of the city, we think, and properly think, of an actual material city, full of glory and beauty, built in the ultimate economy of God; but the glory and beauty of the material will be the outcome of that life which constitutes the city. The remembrance of that at the very beginning of our meditation will enable us to see that things which seem to us full of discouragement, may after all prove to be methods of God, and the very slowness over which we lament in our foolishness is assuredly part of the process necessary for the creation of a life so strong and true and abiding that at last the material city will result.

Let us glance at "The city which hath the foundations," as it was revealed to the Seer of the Galilean Lake in the Isle of Patmos. If you ask me if I really believe that some day, somehow, out of the mystic distance of heaven, there will descend to this earth an actual city, I reply that I am not Sadducean enough to think that only the things I can see and handle today are the real and final things. Whether that be so or not, for today, in the midst of the spiritual conflict, we are to take this vision and find in it spiritual elements which are of abiding value; and therefore, I shall for the sake of brevity pass by the descriptions of the city as to material construction, all of which are valuable and I think full of suggestion. I want first to set that vision in relation to the whole movement of the Book. The city according to the story of that Book is not heaven. Neither is the city to be built in the millennium, but beyond it. I am particularly anxious not to enter into controversy with your mental convictions. The writer may have been mistaken. I am only reminding you of what he wrote. There are no detailed pictures of the millennium in this Book. There are descriptions of events, full of awe and sublime majesty and terrible judgment, which usher in the millennial reign; but the millennium itself is dismissed in this Book in three or four verses in the chapter preceding that in which we have the story of the city. At the close of the millennium John says that the devil will be loosed again after having been chained for a thousand years. Another period of swift judgment will then fall upon the earth; after which, the great white throne and final assize, full of awful majesty.

Beyond all that, as to order, will come the city of God. This city will not be built immediately. The ultimate victory is postponed; not that God has abandoned His work, He is the Architect, the Framer, and He is building; but the victory is not yet. I shall be able to do my day's work better, however, if I can see something of the ultimate victory; and to John was given this wonderful vision of the city that hath the foundations, flashing with the splendor of the precious stones of earth, which in their preciousness are symbols of principle suffused with passion. A city in its form pyramidal, lying upon its base foursquare; a city with walls, and those of jasper, the stone symbolic of conflict, full of beauty.

The subject of supreme interest to us as we look on, out of the midst of the conflict, is that of the conditions of its life. The government of the city is that of the ever-present God, influencing all its inhabitants. All the life of that city is worship. No temple therein; because the Lord Almighty and the Lamb are the temple; and all life has become worship, because all life is communion.

Every city, according to these Eastern figures had a burgess roll, and this city has its burgess roll. A burgess is one who inhabits a walled town, having a tenement there which is his own property. The burgesses of this city are those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. The defiled of every class, such as work abominations and make a lie are excluded.

The vision of this city is that of the great Theocracy which is the true democracy. It is the vision of the true democracy which is the great Theocracy. All is of heaven; the ideal, the process, the realization. It is a city which comes out of heaven. The plan of it was not born in the brain of any man. It is a city entirely of the earth; the material is of the earth, gathered from the earth, returning to the earth. It is the city which Abraham saw but never reached. It is the city toward which all the pilgrims of faith have been looking, and in the building of which they have been co-operating with God by faith, but none of them have reached it. Abraham has not reached it yet. Moses has not entered into it yet. The great seers, and prophets, and psalmists of the past; statesmen, in the economy of God, who have seen it but have never found it. "These all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise." They saw the city, but they have not yet entered it. The goal toward which they ran was not their crowning in heaven, but God's crowning on earth. The city which they saw was not in a land beyond, this to which they hoped to go; but this whole earth, governed by God, from a central city, the metropolis in which God is King, and which therefore is the Theocracy, the people constituting the instrument through which in every age He makes known His will. It is therefore the final and ultimate Theocracy. All attempts to realize the Democracy apart from God will issue in the most disastrous failure; and every attempt to preach the Theocracy which forgets the Democracy, will issue in failure equally disastrous.

Of this city the Architect and Framer is God. The whole plan is in the mind of God. What that is, no man can see finally, perfectly. Some vision has been revealed from time to time to men of vision, and in the vision they have seen something of the glory. Abraham saw it. Moses saw it. Isaiah saw it. Luther saw the city of God. Cromwell saw the city of God. Mazzini saw the city of God. William Booth has seen the city of God.

To take that latest illustration; what drove General Booth into that method which some people, who are near-sighted, criticize, the method connected with the social endeavor? What made him want to care for the flotsam and jetsam of this great city of London and all the cities? What put into his heart the passionate discontent with unholy conditions of life? His vision of the city of God. All the discontent that is constructive is born of a great content with the ultimate purpose of God. To have seen this vision of the city is to be forever restless in every other city, and so "We have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come." The inspiring vision which has created the pilgrims and warriors and builders of faith has been the vision of the city which is in the plan of God. No man has seen it wholly. No man has been able, if he has seen it wholly, to communicate his vision to other men. The thing is too great to be finally stated. The vision is too great for two eyes to see and one mind, by symbols of pen or brush, to convey to the minds of other men. The city of God; not heaven, but the city according to the heavenly pattern; the heavenly city on earth.

Through all the processes of human history, God has been working toward this end. When Josiah Strong wrote that little book, The New Era, he used an illustration full of illumination as he reminded us of how, when Pilate wrote the superscription and had it nailed to the Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, he wrote other and better than he knew. That, which so far as Pilate was concerned, was only a method of annoying the priests, was the writing of God, and the method was of God. The superscription, "King of the Jews," was written in three languages, the Roman, the Hebrew, and the Greek. This, so far as Pilate intended, because Roman soldiers were there and he wanted them to read it, and Greek merchantmen and travelers would be there and he wanted them also to read it, that they all might mock and laugh at the priests. There was a profound significance in the writing of that superscription in the three great languages of the hour, the languages of the three peoples most powerful in the affairs of men. Hebrew was the language of spiritual religion. Greek was the language of intellectual strength. Latin was the language of imperial empire.

God was building by all those great world powers. God was at work, in the midst of the Hebrew religion, in the midst of Greek culture, and at the heart of Roman power. Through all these, there were operative in the world forces making possible the mission and mastery of Christ. Not idly does Scripture declare that He came in the fullness of times. Let me say a thing that I hesitate to say in this way, lest there should seem to lurk in it something of irreverence, but yet let me say it: had He come sooner He would have come too soon; had He come later He would have come too late. He came when the Hebrew nation had prepared in the history of the world the great spiritual atmosphere resulting from the monotheistic doctrine of God. The history of that people is a history of persistent sin against God. Oh the greyness of it all. But there is wonderful sunshine in it too. My spirit has been elated in many an hour of study as I have seen the overruling of God, the chaos coming to cosmos; God for- evermore making the wrath of men to praise Him, and restraining the remainder. However much the Hebrew nation failed, after the captivity they never again set up an idol. They went back to their land a broken, poor, miserable remnant only, under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah; with no king, no prophet, no priest; but a people who had learned the lesson with which they started, "Hear O Israel Jehovah thy God is one." When that master spiritual truth was embodied in the world's history, the Christ came. God was building.

Or, if we turn to the Greek outlook, and think of the wonderful history of Greek culture and refinement, that history of intellectual giants which made it possible to speak of Athens as the fairest shrine of pagan humanity; if there be no other thing to be said, let this at least be said, the Greek had provided, for that time, a language which was of universal use, in some dialect of which, the story of the Christ could be written, in some dialect of which, the messengers of the Cross could preach through all the known world and be understood. God was building. Rome was the center of imperial power, and if you want to know the value of it, read again the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's letters and keep your eye on Paul; the restlessness with which he wanted to get to Rome, the eagerness with which he looked toward it, the haste which made him unable to wait, and compelled him to sit down and write the Roman letter. What was it that made Paul want to reach Rome? It was not the restlessness of the tourist. It was the passion of the missionary. He knew that from Rome, the strategic center of the world, there were roads leading out to all the known world along which her legions traveled; and he saw that they ought to be captured for the traveling of the legions of the Cross. All the forces contributed to prepare the way for His coming in the fullness of the times. God was building.

But there was the preparation not only of what these forces contributed; there was the preparation of their failure. Hebraism, when He came, was degenerate; the home of ritualism and hypocrisy; and the spiritual ideal was not enough to create spiritual religion. By the failure of the past the way was prepared for His coming. The history of Greek intellectualism had become the history of Greek bestiality. When Paul came to Athens, he found Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who knew nothing of Epicurus or the original Stoics ; men who had degraded their philosophies. Then He came, when the way was prepared for Him by this failure; and His evangel was presently published by the Hellenist-Hebrew Paul, and redeemed all that was best in Greek strength. Rome had failed; voluptuousness and brutality were the two facts of her government. By that failure the way was made for the building of the new empire, for the coming in of the Kingdom, for the proclamation of the new evangel. He came, and coming found the past had prepared for Him, the failure had created His opportunity; and in Him, all the essential forces of these three world powers were taken hold of, and their opportunity was created anew. The spiritual religion ; the opportunity for intellectualism; the method of true government, making for abiding strength, all came through Him. These things were the things after which men had groped, and by so doing had made way for His coming, and the imparting of His power. In that groping they had failed, and had made necessary the coming of Another; and He came, not only for the salvation of individual men; let us never make that mistake, for that He came, oh yes, but for more, to take hold of the essential world forces and to compel them to co-operate with the enterprises of God. So God was building, and has ever been building.

There is a great work waiting to be done among our young people. I want someone to write the history of England as Isaiah reveals the history of Judah. I do not think it would be popular in England, but it needs writing; the history of how God has been at work and is at work still, the history of the fact that amid all the chaos and break-up and disruption God is building; a history of the fact that through the centuries and today God is at work.

Ah, Habakkuk, thy trouble has been our trouble. What is God doing? I will get up to the watch tower and see. And he climbed, and God said to him, I am at work, but if I told you what I am doing you would not believe Me. I am bringing the Chaldeans to do My work. And Habakkuk was more amazed than ever; the Chaldeans are not in the covenant, the Chaldeans are people outside the privilege of the Divine government. How can God use the Chaldeans? Once again, I will away to the watch tower. What was the end of his watching? The great psalm, the psalm of a great triumph, a psalm in which a man could say amid the break-up and disruption: -

For though the fig tree shall not blossom,

Neither shall fruit be in the vines;

The labour of the olive shall fail.

And the fields shall yield no meat;

The flock shall be cut off from the fold,

And there shall be no herd in the stalls:

Yet will I rejoice in the Lord,

I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Whose Builder and Maker is God.

This is a dark day, you tell me. There are disappointing things abroad, heartbreaking things abroad; Missionary Societies languishing for lack of funds, indifference spreading over the Christian Church. Away with you; God is building! That is the highest of vision, and if you deny it me, then I will bow my head and die for very heartbreak. But if you will grant it me, I will build, and fight, and sing, because the city will be built, and God's victory will be won.

There are abundant proofs of the tending of humanity toward that ultimate city of God. Do not be at all alarmed at that statement. Some people are very much alarmed. Do you not think the world is getting worse? I am asked. Certainly! But do you not think it is getting better? I know it is! I mean that in all seriousness. Wheat and darnel, "Let both grow together until the harvest." Some men are always looking at the darnel and they say the world is getting worse. Some men see only the wheat and they say the world is getting better. The man who sees the whole field of the world, sees the darnel and the wheat, he sees that evil is becoming more evil and growing into clearer manifestation in all its dastardly devilishness; but he sees that the world is being prepared for the coming of the King. I affirm that there are abundant proofs of the tending of humanity toward the city of God. Compare the world when Christ came with the world today. Then the nations were in thraldom, class in bondage to class. Have you ever thought of this very remarkable statement in the gospel story. "There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be numbered, and it is declared that every man went up to Jerusalem." I do not know whether that impresses you, but to me it is an amazing thing. If they want to number us in this country, they have to come to us; we would not think of going up to report ourselves to be numbered. It is a very slight thing, but it is a revelation of the despotism that existed in those days, but which is gone in the countries of the world influenced by Christianity, and gone forever. Spiritual freedom is becoming civic liberty. Divine Fatherhood is whispering the story of human brotherhood. Laws are being made, or men are attempting to discover laws, for the ennoblement of the people. Care for the helpless is a new element in human history.

If you point to the evil that abounds, and tell me of the breakdown of these very principles to which I have been referring, then I tell you that as it was, so shall it be again. Not only the work of the great Hebrew, Roman and Greek people prepared for Christ; but their failure also prepared for Him. The very fact that failure is everywhere today is to me a revelation of the necessity for some new work of God in the world; and the corroboration of the great prophecies of Scripture, which declare that by another crisis, an advent in the history of humanity, He will at last establish His Kingdom.

Not consciously, any more than Greece or Rome of old did consciously prepare for His coming, but surely all the forces are preparing for that Advent. "God's in His heaven," therefore ultimately, finally, "All's right with the world." Failure itself shall prepare the way for the coming triumph. He will again purge His floor and gather the wheat into His garner and burn the chaff. The city will be built, the victory won, God vindicated.

I looked; aside the dust-cloud rolled -

The Waster seemed the Builder too;

Upspringing from the ruined old I saw the new.

Take heart! The Waster builds again -

A charmed life old goodness hath;

The tares may perish - but the grain

Is not for death.

God works in all things; all obey

His first propulsion from the night

Wake thou and watch!

The world is grey with morning light!