

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed . . . For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Heb.11: 8-10

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband . . . And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be anymore pain: for the former things are passed away. . . And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamb is the light thereof.” Revelation 21:2,4,23

LOOKING FOR A CITY

by Craig Marlatt

I can't wait to get to heaven! It's what I've spent my years as a Christian looking forward to, and I suppose that I will feel that way until I get there. Not that I don't like life in the old here and now. In fact I enjoy life as much or more than anyone else I know. But my heart is set on the city of God, and toward that city I fix my gaze. Just think about it: no more tears, death, or pain. No more wicked men trying to rule the world. No more devil running around like a roaring lion tempting us and making life one big struggle. No more of the petty little tedious things that keep one frustrated and aggravated. And here's the big one: "God himself shall be with [us]. . ." (Revelation 21:3). Won't that be great?

I think today that we've almost forgotten all about our heavenly home. In fact I can't recall if I have ever heard a sermon that was totally about heaven. We get caught up in lots of other things that are all so earthbound. That's why most of us aren't really doing anything for God. Not that doing things for God is life's priority. Certainly it's knowing Him that really ought to be our main goal. But can we know Him and not want to serve Him? I think not!

It's knowing Him, and knowing that He loves me that keeps me going on for Jesus. Granted, I'm certainly not the best example of what a servant of God should be like: I'm not really a great organizer or planner; I usually get too many things going at one time; I have times of doubt and unfaithfulness; I've even been through times of depression; and worst of all I'm a horrible procrastinator when it comes to doing the tedious, but necessary things in life that I hate so much. Still, I keep on pushing against the things that try to keep me from loving and serving God.

— Just as Peter wrote in his second epistle "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Peter 3:14). The bottom line for me is that there really isn't anything that compares with preaching the gospel, so I don't spend much of my time doing anything else, other than taking care of the duties of a husband and father.

Like the saints of old mentioned in the famous 'Hall of Faith' in Hebrews 11, seeing that city awaiting me makes me want to go . . . and do. Why, just look at what they did: Abel offered God a more excellent sacrifice, Enoch walked with, and pleased God, Noah prepared an ark, Abraham went out, Sara received strength to have a child past her

age, Abraham offered up Isaac, Isaac and Jacob followed their fathers promises; Joseph trusted God in an Egyptian prison; Moses, choosing to suffer with God's people rather than to have all the treasures of Egypt, took the Israelites through the Red Sea; Rahab the harlot risked her life protecting the Israelite spies; Gideon and Barak fought great armies; Samson slew a thousand Philistines; David took on the mighty Goliath and was called a man after God's own heart; Daniel stopped the mouths of lions; Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego stood in the fire; Others received their dead back to life, others were tortured, or wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; some were put in prison or stoned or slain with the sword, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. All of them looking ahead for the promised city of God where He would dwell with his people and be their God.

Who am I to argue with such incredible people? I'd rather throw in my hand with that crowd than have all the things that this life has to offer, wouldn't you? No doubt life with Jesus isn't always a picnic, but there are certainly lots of fringe benefits, and the retirement is out of this world!

So where are you today? Are you giving your all for Him or just living the good life? Is he calling you to do something with your life that may cost something or take you a little beyond personal convenience? Don't worry. He never calls us to somewhere that He himself has not gone first. He gave it all! He put the whole thing into the pot and didn't hold back one iota. In fact . . . we cost him his life.

But what kept him going? Hebrews 12:2 says it was . . . the joy that was set before him. And what was that joy?: You and me! The fact that he was going to accomplish his Father's plan and bring many son's into glory (Hebrews 2:10). And we can have that same joy set before us too: to do the will of the Father and be active bringing people to Christ. Like the beer commercial says, "It doesn't get any better than this".

— And we will see heaven soon enough. If we set our affections on him nothing can keep it from us. But we need to know that what we do 'here and now' will definitely effect what we have 'then and there'. For God shall reward every man according to his works (Matthew 16:27).

So what are you waiting for? Live for, and serve God today with all of your heart and you won't regret it, I am sure. When you pass through this life into the city that Abraham and all the others were looking for you'll be glad you did. Remember you've Only one life, 'twill soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last.