

The City as a Symbol

God has communicated with His people through symbols since the beginning of time. The Tabernacle is probably one of the most intense packages of symbols. Every color, metal, precious stone and fabric had a symbolic meaning. The shape and placement of objects had symbolic meaning, as did all the vestments of the priests.

The first symbol God used to reveal Himself to man was the Garden of Eden. Nature is still His broadest tool as He holds all men accountable for the knowledge of God because of the prolific communication flowing from His creation (Romans 1:18-20; Psalm 19:1-6).

The final symbol God will use is that of a city: the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21). I find it significant that Cain built the first city (Genesis 4:17). It was designed to be a place where a sinner could protect his godlessness from the more godly civilization around him.

The stigma of evil is still attached to cities today. The term "inner city" produces images of crime and brokenness. The affluent frequently move out of the "inner city" to the suburb because it is a "better" place. The dream of many is to finally escape the city altogether when they retire and move to the "country."

Although the devil first used the symbol of the city, God has no intentions of allowing him to keep that symbol. God is going to sanctify the symbol. Hence the final city will be shaped like a cube, 12,000 stadia in each dimension. The only other cube in Scripture is the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple which was 20 cubits in each dimension.

The Holy of Holies was a place where the glory of God could dwell among His people because there was no sin. The New Jerusalem will also be a sinless place, and it will be a place where the glory of God dwells among His people.

This is the God-breathed symbol of a city: a place where God and man meet in the context of holiness, bathed with the visible glory of God. As we embrace city reaching, we should focus on the end result. God wants to redeem the symbol. God wants some cities that are so full of His glory that people are waiting in line to move into the city, not out of it. The concept of the city belongs to God, not the devil.

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