



*13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. 14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matt 5:13-16)*

When we speak of attending Church, we do not usually say “Let’s go to THE Church this Sunday,” but rather “Let us go TO Church Sunday!” We do not use the definite, or indefinite, article adjective to specify a certain Church, but use only the term alone for the Church of God as universal and catholic – not to be confused with Roman. We do not say “I love ‘a’ God, or ‘the’ God, because there is only one God, and only one Church. Though there are many different denominations, there is only one Church of God, and that is the Church that is subject to the Sovereignty of our Lord Jesus Christ and filled with His Love. Neither is Church a BUILDING or a CATHEDRAL – Church is wherever Christ rules in the hearts of His adherents. If under a Kon Tree in the bush country of Kenya, or a Palm Tree in a desert oasis of Iran, it is the heart of the people in worship, both in Spirit and in Truth, that defines the Church.

The Great Continental Reformer, Martin Luther, chose the words of a Psalm to describe the Church: “*3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.*” Psalms 87:3) So, a common biblical reference to the Church is “*City of God.*” A city is a collective gathering of people bound by a common interest, trades, and culture. It has limits to its boundaries, and gates for the coming and going of its citizens. So does the City of God – the CHURCH – have boundaries of faith and obedience which seals its walls; and there are gates for the entering in, and going out, of its adherents. Those who enter that City do so on the grounds of faith and calling. Those who depart (missionaries) go out into the world to bring others who will enlarge the skirts of the City.

Sion was a mount in Jerusalem upon which there was a Jebusite fort. The Temple was built upon that mound, therefore the old church of the Jews was called Zion because it represented the City of God. Later it came to be the title for the bigger Church – whether Jew or Gentile. “*22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect .*” Heb 12:22-23) It is not the dirty and violent little city of modern-day Israel that is the Jerusalem of God, but that Jerusalem which shall descend from Heaven as a Bride adorned for her Husband. “*2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*” (Rev 21:2)

Just as King David conquered Jerusalem and took it from the heathen (Jebusite) occupants, so did the Son of David (our Lord Jesus Christ) conquer the New Jerusalem and vanquished the unbelieving Jewish rulers and priests from the Church which He purchased with His own blood. By grace, not works or of our own volition, are we conquered and brought into that Fair City of God.

We may examine in what particulars the City of God (Church) is likened to a city of the world:

1. A worldly city is built by the hands of men as a safe dwelling place for its inhabitants. The Church, however, is built by Christ for the habitation of God. It is an Ark of Safety for all who constitute the Elect of God. *"24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation (Acts 17:24-26)*
2. Perhaps owing to the fact that America was established as a Christian Republic, we have had less use for walls, than other parts of the world, to protect our cities. There is a prophecy concerning a merciless people of Gog & Magog in Ezekiel that could apply as much to our prodigal nation as any other: *"11 And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, 12 To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land."* Ezek 38:11-12) But, unlike the growing immoral cities of America, the Church of God (City) is not without strong defenses: *"We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks."* Isaiah 26:1) *"1 They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. 2 As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever."* (Psalm 125:1-2) I can imagine no stronger defense than to be surrounded by the Lord Protector Himself.
3. The strong cities of old Europe were set upon hills to enhance protection. So is the City of God situated at the very heights of the mountains: *"1 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. 2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. 3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge."* (Psalms 48:1-3) *"14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid."* (Matt 5:14)
4. An earthly city is constructed of a great variety of materials and resources – wood, stone, glass, iron, etc. And there are a variety of different shapes and sizes of her buildings. But the City of God is likewise shaped to conform to the ordinances and zoning laws of God. *"19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."* (Eph 2:19-22) There are many proud churches of the Reformation tradition that boast of their Apostolic Succession, yet those who are in its lineage deny by thought, word, and deed the very doctrines of the Apostles. How can this be? If the Succession is not DOCTRINAL – it is not the Succession of the Apostles regardless the defiled hands that were laid upon a man's head. Each saint, regardless of size or shape, is cut out to fit precisely into the compact walls of the

City of God. You were hewn of stone long before the construction began.  
*"3 Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together."* (Psalm 122:3)

5. An earthly city has laws and ordinances by which the citizens therein abide. There are officials to enforce the law, and a mayor or other official to see that all laws are kept for the good of the people. In the City of God, there are likewise ordinances and laws that require obedience – not enforced by arms, but by love. Its Mayor is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
6. Earthly cities have many merchants who buy, sell, and trade in merchandise peculiar to the needs of the city. The City of God has merchants also who buy the word, and sell it not. (see Proverbs 23:23) The merchandise we trade in is heavenly and quite expensive. It is truth, love, and faith. Our daily discourse is in Heaven, not worldly concerns, (Phil 3:20) Solomon compares the City of God to Merchant Ships that ply the waters and bring their merchandise from afar. When we mine the Holy Scriptures for the beauties of truth contained therein, we are bartering at the very door of Heaven. Once we have acquired the glorious truths secluded in Holy Writ, we cannot keep quiet but as "Blind Bartemeaus" we must herald the news to all who will hear. The merchandise of that City is abundant and free to all.

#### **Footnote**

This devotion has been merely an introduction to the nature of the Church. Volumes, and even tomes, have been written concerning the subject. But I hope this little devotion will spur an increased interest in the subject of the Church and draw each of us nearer to that Church's Owner – the Lord Jesus Christ!