

Ode to the City [Psalm 122]
Draft by Steve Carr [www.houseofcarr.com/thread]

INTRODUCTION

1. This past Monday, the new casino opened down the street.
 - a. As I was getting the daughter ready for bed, we heard fireworks.
 - b. We looked down the street and watched, then went closer.
 - c. As we stood there Kaelyn looked up to me and said, "Remember when you said people thought you were crazy for moving to the city?"
 - 1) NOTE: She's heard me utter this polemic of urban living many times before
 - d. She responded, "I think you'd be crazy NOT to want to live in the city."
2. It was then I realized that I had successfully raised an evangelist.
3. One of the core values of our church is city, we spend much time talking about it.
 - b. This is not self-serving. Our country is becoming more urbanized but has been ignored
 - 1) But this isn't just about here and now, there's a biblical precedent.

IN THIS TEXT, THE PSALMIST EXAMINES FOUR ASPECTS OF THE CITY

Verses 1,2

¹ I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD."

² Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem.

1. It is the most spiritual city in the world, the home of three of the world's great religions
 - a. The temple mount is the reason: also claimed as Muhammed's ascension point.
 - b. But the Jews claim it goes further back.
 - 1) This is a picture from our trip to Jerusalem in 2005 that doesn't receive press
 - 2) Non-biblical Jewish tradition holds the temple mount was actually the site of EDEN
2. The origins of Jerusalem was as a city of the Jebusites (known as Salem or Jebus)
 - a. "Yireh" a place of the fear/service of God and Shalom = peace
 - b. Conquered by King David about 1010 BC, **[MAP OF CITY]**
 - 1) Strategic city because it was surrounded by valleys
 - 2) As a walled city showed importance of GATES as mentioned in verse 2.
 - 3) In the ancient world, the city was crucial for defense.
 - c. The importance of this city is made in the 10th century: location of the temple
 - 1) In ancient world, major temples were almost always in cities.
3. This concept didn't evaporate in the ancient world. It persists today
 - a. Even as empires and nations grew, cities remained essential to life
 - b. Futurists suggest that we're returning to a time where cities are even more important
 - c. This is something seen here in Cincinnati, especially in relation to the Tri-State
 - 1) By in large, people here identify more with the city than our states.
4. But what sometimes happens in these areas is that cities become object of worship
 - a. Spend anytime talking to a New Yorker, and you will hear that type of verbiage
 - 1) City's themselves become objects of worship
 - b. Expressed in M83's song Midnight City: The city is my church.
 - c. BEWARE OF THE ALLURE OF CITY WORSHIP

Verse 3

³ Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together.

1. Wrestling with **DENSITY**: a concept many Americans abhor.
 - a. It has long been the greatest critique of the city: too many people
 - b. Cincinnati in 1850 is greater than that of Manhattan.

2. Benefits of density in the ancient world
 - a. **Protection:** living further away leaves you exposed
 - 1) In our suburban oasis, I felt more paranoid because of the open space
 - b. **Access** to resources: by and large, what you need is within proximity
 - 1) Eventually, lack of density will screw over the US and already has.
 - 2) We can't maintain all the roads that we've continued to build/
3. Biggest critique: the density is a dropping ground of the **impoverished**
 - a. Unfortunately, this is just an urban legend.
 - c. **Edward Glaeser**, Harvard researcher clarifies.

"Cities aren't full of poor people because cities make people poor, but because cities attract poor people with the prospect of improving their lot in life. The poverty rate among recent arrivals to big cities is higher than the poverty rate of long term residents, which suggests that, over time, city dwellers' fortunes can improve considerably . . . [the poor] flock to urban areas because cities offer advantages they couldn't find in their previous homes."
4. The ultimate advantage: coming to grips with our own humanity.
 - a. DENSITY forces us to interact with people we normally wouldn't.
 - 1) Daily, I interact with people across a wide spectrum
 - b. DENSITY insists that we grapple with a multitude of world views
 - 1) American evangelicalism mostly adheres to a singular political view
 - 2) It has little tolerance for those who think otherwise
 - 3) All thoughts must be analyzed against the gospel
 - c. DENSITY forces me to rethink my superiority

Verses 4,5

⁴That is where the tribes go up—the tribes of the LORD—to praise the name of the LORD according to the statute given to Israel.⁵There stand the thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

1. First worship, density, now justice.
 - a. The Scriptures expect that the city would be a place of justice and truth
 - b. Tombstone the movie is still McAwesome. The history, though, was chaotic
 - 1) It was a struggle for the law to be enforced
 - c. In ancient days, cities provided a greater opportunity for justice than countryside.
2. And even when this went awry, the sense of justice was overwhelming.
 - a. One of the darkest times in Cincinnati history was the 1884 Courthouse riots
 - 1) Two men killed their boss and hid the body in the Mill Creek in Northside
 - 2) The jury was "bought off" and convicted them only of manslaughter
 - b. The Enquirer actually encouraged people to enact justice and lynch mobs formed
 - 1) Over fifty people died, but they did so in an attempt to enact justice.
3. The city of Jerusalem was to be a place where justice reigned
 - a. The Lord empowered the kings to ruled and did so with the threat of their punishment
 - b. **Jeremiah 21:12**

¹²This is what the LORD says to the dynasty of David: "'Give justice each morning to the people you judge! Help those who have been robbed; rescue them from their oppressors. Otherwise, my anger will burn like an unquenchable fire because of all your sins.

Verses 6-9

⁶Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you be secure.

⁷May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels."

⁸For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, "Peace be within you."

⁹For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your prosperity.

1. WORSHIP, DENSITY, JUSTICE, and finally PEACE.
 - a. The request of verse 6 is still offered as a discipline to be followed.

- 1) We want the city to be a place of peace
 - b. The architectural structure is offered as an example of keeping EXTERNAL peace
 - 1) But note that verse 8 implores that there needs to be peace WITHIN the walls
- 2. This command is not specific to the city of Jerusalem
 - a. It is repeated elsewhere in the Scriptures.
 - b. Specifically, it is said to the Jews when they are living in exile in Babylon
 - c. **Jeremiah 29:7**
 - And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare."*
- 3. If it is a command for them, then surely it is a command for us.
 - a. Take pride in your city. Be not afraid to speak up when necessary.
 - b. Just yesterday, I yelled at kids in the community for throwing snowballs at cars.
 - 1) I'm collecting dozens of these stories because I've grown tired.
 - c. IF NOT US, THEN WHO???

CONCLUSION

- 1. Timothy Keller said urban workers think they're saving the city, but it saved them.
- 2. This city is on the rise. People will continue to move here, play here, and enjoy here.
 - a. But this doesn't eliminate the great spiritually deficiency in our midst.
 - b. The city needs Jesus.
- 3. Why city: it's the trajectory of the Scriptures

E Luther Copeland

"The goal of humanity is a redeemed city, a garden city with the healing tree of life and the river of the water of life transposed from the primal garden. The metaphor of ultimate redemption is a combination of God's creation (a garden) and man's creation (a city)."