

The City that Never Sleeps

I. Slide1 Announce:

A. Next Wed Night: Movie Night (26th), *Lion King*. Hakuna Matata. (Swahili)

II. Slide2 Intro: *The City that Never Sleeps* (NY)

A. Slide3a In *Valla-dolid, Spain*, where Christopher Columbus died in 1506, stands a **monument** commemorating the great discoverer. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the memorial is a statue of a **lion destroying one of the Latin words** that had been part of Spain's motto for centuries. Before Columbus made his voyages, the Spaniards thought they had reached the outer limits of earth. Thus their motto was *Ne Plus Ultra*, which means *No More Beyond*. The word being torn away by the lion is *ne* or *no*, making it read *Plus Ultra*. Columbus had proven that there was indeed *more beyond*.

1. Slide3b Prov.23:18 *For surely there is a hereafter & your hope will not be cut off*

B. Slide4 Read Heb.11:8-10 - *Here is 4000 years or 40 centuries of faith...so far.*

C. Kent Hughes said, To get a feel for what this was like (for Abraham), imagine **God** promising you & your descendants the land of **Guatemala**, & then in obedience traveling there & living the rest of your life in your camper, along with your sons' families in their campers families, moving from place to place. You remain alien for the remainder of your sojourn, without full citizenship rights, a perpetual outsider.

1. Abraham never fit in. His **religion** was different (monotheism vs. polytheism). His standards of **morality** were different. His **worldview** was continually colliding with the inhabitant's worldview.

2. A life of **faith** is not **anti-cultural**, but **countercultural**.

3. Abraham was **not separate** from his culture; in fact he was deeply involved in politics of the land. **Yet**, he was never **at home**.

D. There are many parallels w/Abraham's experience & the Christians.

1. Do we feel **at home** here? or, do we feel like our missionaries, as **ExPat's?**
[expatriates = live outside your native country]

2. Would someone describe **you** as: [a] A pilgrim, a sojourner, a camper, or an alien? Or [b] A citizen, a permanent resident, an occupant, 1 who's perfectly at home here.

a) Let us **live**, as Martin Luther used to say, *with one foot in the air*.

E. **Heaven** - Its beauty & blessings beyond human words to describe or explain.

1. The focus isn't the *absence of sin*, but the *presence of God* in all His **glory**.
2. *I go to prepare a place for you* is the best medicine for a broken heart, & the best foundation for wavering feet.

F. As Marco Polo, the famous *Venetian traveler* of the 13th century, lay dying, he was urged by his detractors to **recant** - *to withdraw the stories he had told about China and the lands of the Far East*. But he refused, saying, "*I have not told half of what I saw.*"

1. I think it's the same for **John** here.

III. Slide5 **WHAT JOHN SEE'S (9-21)**

A. Slide6 **HERE COMES THE BRIDE** (9)

B. The City descends like a bride descending down the aisle.

1. **AKA**, The bride, the Lamb's wife, the great city, the holy Jerusalem.

C. Slide7a **LOOKING FOR A CITY** (10)

D. **In the spirit** - John's visions are formed by his 4 experiences: 1:10, 4:2, 17:3, 21:10.

E. Heb.11:8-10 - Abraham was on journey to a city...this is **THAT** City.

1. His journey was a walk of **faith** (not sight).
2. **Seeing** is not faith, but *reasoning*.
3. **Illustration**: In the old days when you crossed the Atlantic by ship there was obviously **no marked path**. You couldn't see the shore after a time. Yet, each day the captain would mark the progress on a chart, as if he was following a giant chalk line across the water. When you came w/in sight of the land on the other side of the Atlantic, you knew exactly where you were, as if U had been able to see it from 3000m away.

- a) **What did the captain do?** He simply plotted the course every day by **looking to the sky & determining his course** by the sun & stars. **He used heavenly lights, not earthly ones.**
- b) **Genuine faith looks up & sails**, by using God's great **Son**.
- c) **Genuine faith** never travels by **seeing** the shoreline, earthly lighthouses, nor paths along the way.

4. **Welcome to Abraham's City.**

5. David speaking to God said in Ps.39:12 **For I am a stranger with You, A sojourner, as all my fathers were.** [Note **with you not to you**]

6. **We are spiritual immigrants** (somebody who has come to a country & settled there)

7. We are only passing through.

- a) **Slide7b** An Anonymous writer wrote about an American tourist's visit to the 19th century Polish rabbi, **Hofetz Chaim**: Astonished to see that the rabbi's home was only a simple room filled with books, plus a table and a bench, the tourist asked: "Rabbi, where is your furniture?" "Where is yours?" replied the rabbi. "Mine?" asked the puzzled American. "But I'm a visitor here. I'm only passing through." "So am I," said **Hofetz Chaim**.

F. **Slide8 FINALLY GLORIFIED** (11)

G. **Gloria in excelsis Deo** - Glory to God in the highest. *Here we are having His glory.*

H. **Slide9 HEAVEN'S GATES** (12,13)

I. Here we have the REAL *Heaven's Gates*.

- 1. On each is inscribed the name of each one of the 12 tribes.
- 2. This shows God's faithfulness to the promises which He made at the dawn of history **to Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob, re: their descendants.**

J. **Slide10 THE 12 FOUNDATIONS** (14)

K. **Each layer consists of a different precious stone.**

- 1. Which each provide a different color.

L. **12 tribes; now 12 apostles** – **Together, yet still distinct.** *continuity*

- 1. **Examples:** Like 2 people getting married. **Together, yet still distinct.**

M. **Slide11 THE MEASUREMENTS** (15-17)

N. (16) **1200 furlongs** – about 1400 miles.

1. The highest **skyscrapers** are only 1,500 feet high.
2. Our **space satellites** orbit earth 300 to 600 miles above the surface of the earth. [**we are talking 1500 MILES** high]
3. Henry Morris said, *it would be like the Moon cubed.*

O. (17) **144 cubits** – the wall was **200' thick** (**yet** clear/transparent or *translucent*)

P. (NLT) *according to the human standard used by the angel.*

Q. **Slide12 THE CONSTRUCTION** (18-20)

R. (18) **Pure gold, like clear glass** - There is nothing *not genuine*, nothing *not transparent*.

1. **Transparent** – Thus, wherever **the Lamb** is in the City you will see him.

S. (19,20) **The Gems** – We are not sure exactly what the *1st century equivalent* of some of these precious stones were, **yet** it is clear **a great variety** existed.

1. **Note the absence of diamonds in the city?** No problem, **they weren't known as gems in the 1st century.** In fact, they didn't start popping up in European jewelry until about 1,200 years later.

T. **In construction** around the world you often use what is **plentiful**, thus **inexpensive**.

1. **I was surprised in India** - much **marble & teak**.
2. **In contrast**, the New Jerusalem is constructed from **precious & splendid materials**.

- a) Transparent **gold** paving the streets, immense **pearls** are the gates, **Jasper** for the walls.

U. **Slide13 THE PEARLY GATES** (21)

V. **Wow...** There really are *pearly gates*.

W. Each gate...one pearl – I guess the **oysters** in heaven have been **super-sized**.

X. **Slide14a Why do you think pearls?** Well, **how is a pearl formed?**

1. Humanly speaking it is *the story of suffering*.
2. Pearls are formed by the **intrusion** of some **foreign substance**.
 - a) [**Not sand**, usually a **biological intruder**, *a parasite organism, like drilling worm*]
3. This becomes the source of **irritation, suffering, & pain**.

4. **Consequently** the oyster responds to the irritation by producing **Nacre**/or *Mother of Pearl* (a combo of **calcium and protein**) **thus** eventually a pearl is formed.
 5. **So too**, *the blood of Christ* continues to cover us...over & over...with a special glory, all the way to heaven. Ultimately turning us into a **glistening jewel of delight**.
- Y. The shining gates of the New Jerusalem therefore seem to suggest something about the conditions necessary for entering there.
1. **Slide14b** It's as if God is reminding us that we must ***through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God***. Acts 14:22
 2. Each **Pearly Portal** emphasizes the truth that ***if we suffer w/Him, we shall reign w/Him***. 2 Tim.2:12
- Z. **Christ** is the only door to heaven, **but** its capital city has 12 gates so the redeemed may come from all points of the compass, *from all tribes & nations*.

IV. **Slide15 WHAT JOHN DOESN'T SEE (22-27)**

- A. **OMISSIONS** – No temple, no sun, no moon. (also, no closed gates, no impurity, no evil)
1. **Why omitted?** - God fulfills all these roles now (temple, sun, moon).
 - a) He is all the ***illumination*** that is needed.
 - b) And since the Temple had been used as a place where people would congregate to get ***closer to God*** it apparently had no further use.
 - c) A theologian describe heaven as ***an unknown region with a well-know inhabitant***.
- B. (23) **Light** (*of the world*) is what gives everything its ***beauty***.
1. **Would you shop for jewelry in the dark?** Without **light** nothing has **beauty**.
- C. (25) **Its gates shall not be shut at all** – It's ***a city that never sleeps***.
1. A city would shut its gates at night to **protect** it from its enemies.
- D. (27) **If they could enter, would they find satisfaction in its blessings?**
1. **Slide16a** 1 Cor.2:14 ***The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.***

2. **Slide16b** *The Great Divorce*, by CS Lewis. [*a theological dream vision. bus of unbel's to heaven. It's most beautiful, but immense pain to even walk on the grass*]
- E. There is an old legend of a **swan** and a **crane**. A beautiful swan alighted by the banks of the water in which a crane was wading about seeking snails. For a few moments the crane viewed the swan in awe & wonder and then inquired: "Where do you come from?" "I come from heaven!" replied the swan. "And where is heaven?" asked the crane. "Heaven!" said the swan, "Heaven! have you never heard of heaven?" And the beautiful bird went on to describe the grandeur of the Eternal City. She told of streets of gold, and the gates and walls made of precious stones; of the river of life, pure as crystal, upon whose banks is the tree whose leaves shall be for the healing of the nations. In eloquent terms the swan sought to describe the hosts who live in the other world, but without arousing the slightest interest on the part of the crane. Finally the crane asked: "Are there any snails there?" "Snails!" repeated the swan; "No! Of course there are not." "Then," said the crane, *as it continued its search along the slimy banks of the pool*, "you can have your heaven. *I want snails!*"
- F. The great goal of *creation & redemption* is **achieved** in *direct communion & fellowship* between **God & His people**.
1. Are you a citizen?
- G. **Slide17** **Light** after darkness, **gain** after loss; **Strength** after weakness, **crown** after cross; **Sweet** after bitter, **hope** after fears; **Home** after wandering, **praise** after tears; **Sheaves** after sowing, **sun** after rain; **Sight** after mystery, **peace** after pain; **Joy** after sorrow, **calm** after blast; **Rest** after weariness, **sweet** rest at last; **Near** after distant, **gleam** after gloom; **Love** after loneliness, **life** after tomb; After long agony, rapture of **bliss**; Right was the pathway, leading to **this**.