

A nighttime photograph of a city skyline, likely New York City, viewed from across a body of water. The buildings are illuminated with various lights, and a prominent blue light beam shines down from the top of the frame onto the city. The title "LIFE IN THE CITY" is overlaid in large, white, stylized letters across the bottom of the image.

LIFE IN THE CITY

By Waldo Malan

I am sure that the definition of “city” has changed dramatically over the history of man. Have you ever wondered (like I do), about what city it was that Cain fled to after murdering his brother Abel? I mean, logically it seems that at the time there was Adam, Eve and their two sons; at least, those are the characters from the history of mankind that we had met until then. So, what city is the Bible writer referring to? Perhaps the drama that played itself out in the murder of Abel happened some hundred odd years after the closure of the Garden? Even then that city could not have been huge by any stretch of the imagination.

What I find even more intriguing is that Cain fled to the city because he believed somehow that it would provide him with the safety he needed at that time. Today, nothing has changed. People ‘flee’ daily from the perceived insignificant rural life to exchange it for the promised glamour and success of the urban life. Once there, they soon realize that the tranquillity of a rural life have aspects that far outweigh the frantic rat-race mentality often associated with city life.

Fact is, we have both experiences as valid realities in the lives of people. Now whether one stays in a village or in a city, the way life is experienced in that setting is still determined by the people themselves. Could there be a better quality of life in a rural environment as opposed to city life? The accessibility of retail items in cities far outweighs the rural counterparts. But then again, what is life really about – quality of life or the amassing of stuff?

Walk into any travel agency and the majority of offerings are destinations to major cities around the world. There are travel options to more remote areas, but these seem to be far less when compared to urban travel. Why is this so? Could it be that our cultural and historical collections are by far and large housed in cities?

Let me get back to Cain for a moment, and the fact that he sought refuge in a city. Cities have always been associated with strength, safety and the collective efforts of mankind. Even at spiritual level cities are equated with strongholds and beauty. Examples abound in Scripture, the “City of David”

being one. Another example is that God compares the Bride of Christ to a city, more specifically the New Jerusalem by name. So if all we live and experience has its roots in the spiritual (a theme we’ve explored in previous issues) then could we learn to find peace and security in the madness of life that is associated with urban living? We can also find comparisons between the way we beautify our living spaces (and our urban experiences) and the way we take care of our spiritual man.

No matter how we look at the places we inhabit, both positive and negative experiences will form part of that life; the crux of the matter being in which choices, and how those choices are made!

We stand at the beginning of a new month full of potential and promise, and we have a unique opportunity to make a difference in the places we call home. These opportunities include the ability to make choices that will benefit or harm those who share our space. This places a great responsibility on our shoulders... are you brave enough to embrace this?