

Godopolis; the spiritual truth of the city
January 20, 2008
John Van Sloten

[City of Blinding Lights DVD]... **(1)** I've been listening to that **U2 song** quite a bit lately... trying to figure out its meaning... **PAUSE...** figure out **what a 'city' means!**... **PAUSE...** what it means to be a **part of one...** **PAUSE** **"Why are you part of a city?..."** **LONG PAUSE...**

Also trying to figure out **what God's plan is** via urban context... **"Why this sociological and cultural form?"** **PAUSE...** **"Why this shape** for human development O?

"(2) Blessings not just for the ones who kneel... luckily" **PAUSE...** So many **blessings come to us** via the phenomenon of city... and for the most part they're common to all of us... a **common grace...**

[(3) Thomas Story – "You live in a place that has a university... places of higher education... many in the world could never dream of doing what you're doing... grace gift of generation of knowledge!"]... **PAUSE...**

You live in a city w/**universities...** &**(4)**w/hospitals (high tech refuges for sick, some of the best care in world!)... w/**(5) office towers** (these hubs of entrepreneurial creativity, wealth and commerce)... **PAUSE...** **(6)**We live in a town that's **increasingly filled with the arts...** with **theatres, museums, orchestras,** & up & coming **bands...** **PAUSE...** We have these **(7) huge stadiums for sport** (and sometimes we even celebrate there!)

We have **infrastructure** to get us there... **PAUSE...** **safety and security of emergency services** (police,

fire, EMS)... **water, power, transportation and communication links... PAUSE...** an amazing food supply system (just look at choice/availability of any food store) **PAUSE... (8)**We have a **killer economy...** good jobs... **well built homes...** we're safe & sound! **PAUSE...** what an **amazing urban plan!** (GOD) **What a terrific idea; this city!...** **"(9)** Blessings not just for the ones who kneel... luckily"

[**CAVEAT** I know its not perfect... urban environment falls short... but still so much good here... so much of O's goodness here!... **so much potential**]...

"Potential..." **PAUSE...**I think that's an important word in trying to answer the, **"Why the city God?"** question.

Where else can so much potential be realized?... what other cultural form can offer more to the human race?

PAUSE... Keller"(10) God made the city to be a developmental tool, a form of cultural 'gardening', designed to draw out the riches he put into the earth, nature and the human soul at creation. Even after the fall, cities are places of 'common grace' though each factor also now can be used (and is!) for evil purposes."

Later one he writes, **"(11)** Cities are the 'culture-forming wombs' of the society, made by God to be so." BY GOD!

[JVS Phil dialogue] (12-14) Why the city God?

"Because it's the best place for humanity to be come fully itself. Prosperity, commerce, the arts, education, health and community care, etc, will reach their maximal potential when human beings come together in an urban environment. The interdependent synergy of the city will be the place where human beings will continue to grow and learn and worship forever! When we become fully ourselves God is honoured. We're also in a position to know him more **(Calvin's self knowing to know God more point)**. As we engage in ever higher pursuits, in ever

more perfect places, with ever greater knowledge and beauty and community, we'll ever more reflect the image of our Maker!"

Get that math?... cities are the best place for us to be the best we can be... best we can be is the best place from which to **know/love/serve and honour God...**

(15) Heaven will be a lot like a city... a perfect city!...

[(16-26) ISIAH foretold it – READ IS 60 excerpts]...

[(27-28) John saw it in a vision!... READ REV 21:1-5]

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." " Rev 21:1-5, NIV

[explain New Earth Heaven concept vs. stereotype]...
Heaven is going to be **this; made perfect!..** something like a city, except **perfect/new/re-deemed.**

“(29) The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass. I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” Rev 21:21, MSG

No churches in heaven... no steeples, pews, preachers!
God is going to be **worshipped via a different venue!**
God will be **everywhere**, known by **everyone**, **all the time...** **PAUSE...** so the way I read it the **physical space of the church will be replaced by a city!**
LONG PAUSE... a world full of cities... Godopolis plus!

And all of life/all of city life... our **eating & drinking & working & loving...** our **gardening, creating, learning and singing...** our **sport and our science, our**

commuting and our rest... PAUSE... will honour God will worship God... will glorify him!...

Heaven on earth... in that new city

So... that's what this is going to be one day!... **PAUSE**
This (when its right) is a **foretaste...** God is definitely into the idea of city!... **this is his, this belongs to him!**
PAUSE... this, when it's done right, is a reflection of him... of his image in his creations... PAUSE...

(SLOWLY) **“So what God, does the city teach us about you?” PAUSE....**

**“(30) The more you see the less you know
The less you find out as you go
I knew much more then than I do now”**

[Remember when you were younger & knew it all?]
I(JVS) have to admit I had no idea that a city could teach me about you God... probably new to you as well!
PAUSE... there is more going on in Calgary than meets the eye! **There is a God to be known via your urban existence...** Q is who is that God?... **PAUSE...**

& what does this city(in it's unique God given makeup /once you pare away the depravity/brokenness) **what does it teach us about you God?**

[Go over the HOMEWORK assignment]

Recall the wonder you felt the first time ever went downtown? **[JVS office building experience]**
engage the homework... engage your urban week with those kinds of eyes again...

Prayer (eyes to see...)

7. How does this new perspective better honour God?

Godopolis Homework

“As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD Almighty, in the city of our God: God makes her secure forever.”
Psalm 48:8

OK, here's the 'seeing God more via the city' exercise.

- 1. Think of one positive way you most actively engage the urban context; that one thing that's uniquely you.** (ie: what you do at a school, hospital, in a city park, downtown, as an engineer, in a specific relationship, role, whatever...)
- 2. What makes the city the best place for this activity to play out? Why can this only happen in an urban context?** (note specific reasons; the market, facility locations, environmental factors, etc...)
- 3. How does the urban context allow this activity to flourish/excel?** (again be as specific as you can)
- 4. How does doing this activity make you more fully you?** (what traits are developed, how do you grow, how is your life enlarged, encouraged, enabled?)
- 5. How does becoming more fully you help you know God(your maker) more?** (how do the traits from the previous question reflect who God is? Is the good thing in you like a good thing in God?)
- 6. How does thinking this way change your life?**

so that men may bring you the wealth of the nations—
their kings led in triumphal procession...

(v16) Then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior,
your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

Isaiah 60

The Glory of Zion (using image of city of Jerusalem)

1 "Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.

2 See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the LORD rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.

3 Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

4 "Lift up your eyes and look about you:
All assemble and come to you;
your sons come from afar,
and your daughters are carried on the arm.

5 Then you will look and be radiant,
your heart will throb and swell with joy;
the wealth on the seas will be brought to you,
to you the riches of the nations will come...

10 "Foreigners will rebuild your walls,
and their kings will serve you.
Though in anger I struck you,
in favor I will show you compassion.

11 Your gates will always stand open,
they will never be shut, day or night,

17 Instead of bronze I will bring you gold,
and silver in place of iron.
Instead of wood I will bring you bronze,
and iron in place of stones.
I will make peace your governor
and righteousness your ruler.

18 No longer will violence be heard in your land,
nor ruin or destruction within your borders,
but you will call your walls Salvation
and your gates Praise.

19 The sun will no more be your light by day,
nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you,
for the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.

20 Your sun will never set again,
and your moon will wane no more;
the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your days of sorrow will end.

21 Then will all your people be righteous
and they will possess the land forever.
They are the shoot I have planted,
the work of my hands,
for the display of my splendor.

22 The least of you will become a thousand,
the smallest a mighty nation.
I am the LORD;
in its time I will do this swiftly."

