

## A CITY OF LIGHT IN A WORLD OF DARKNESS

by Tom Wacaster

You might say that this is a "tale of two cities." The first city that I want to tell you about is Las Vegas, Nevada. Any attempt to adequately describe the brightness of this "gambling capital of the world" would be feeble at best. Daytime in the midst of night time is an understatement. Standing outside the Golden Nugget in downtown Las Vegas at 11:00 P.M. could be likened to standing outside in the early morning hours at Anytown USA. While it may not be as bright as the sky at high noon, it is bright enough to dispel the darkness and leave the distinct impression that it is anything BUT nigh unto midnight. Two years ago the citizens of Las Vegas erected a canopy over a four block stretch of one downtown street. Inside this canopy are more than 2,000,000 lights, and every hour on the hour from dark to dusk the city provides a computerized, motion picture type light show. The glitter and glamour of this Nevada town is without equal. Here is a city bathed in lights, but one that sits in darkness. The apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians and informed them, and us, that "they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunken are drunken in the night" (1 Thess. 5:7). If there was ever a word which might describe the spiritual status of that city, it is the word darkness. This is a kind of darkness that does not come with the setting of the sun, but sin within the soul. It is spiritual and intellectual darkness. This darkness cannot be dispelled with electric lights, florescent bulbs, or light extravaganzas blinking on and off. This is the darkness of a Christ-less life. It is the darkness of ignorance and immorality. It is the darkness of enmity toward and separation from God. It is the darkness of wickedness, wherein is partying, drunkenness, adultery and wild abandonment. But most interestingly, it is a darkness that is chosen above light by the masses of humanity. People who are enslaved to this darkness actually love that darkness, and avoid the light. Here is how our Lord described it: "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, lest his works should be reproved. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God" (John 3:19-21). Our Lord came to deliver us from darkness (Col. 1:13).

Now let me tell you about another city. This is a "city set on a hill" (Matthew 5:14). It is the "heavenly city," that one day will be called home to heaven, away from this world of darkness and sin. It is a city whose light must shine so as to provide light for a world that sits in darkness. I am speaking of the church of our Lord. We have been called "out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). We are to have no fellowship with the "unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11-12). Even as we drove down the "strip" so bathed in lights, and watched the crowds who were enamored with the glitter of the hour, my heart ached because of the countless thousands who wandered the streets with their eyes blinded by the brightness of the Las Vegas lights.

All men live in one of two cities. They either live in the "Las Vegas" of this world, or the city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. I do not know who wrote the following, but I shall close with its clear and concise message:

"If there were no other light in the world, I would let my light shine.... If there were darkness everywhere, it would take only one, small candle - perhaps mine

- to begin pushing back the darkness.... If there were no one to join with me in pushing back the darkness, I have a God-given obligation to do what I do to the best of my ability for as long as I can.... If there were no one to walk in the light, but only the rumblings of those who curse the darkness from the shadows, my light will not be discouraged.... If this were all there is to life... to knowledge... to relationships with our fellow man, then even the lighting of one candle with conviction is significant."