

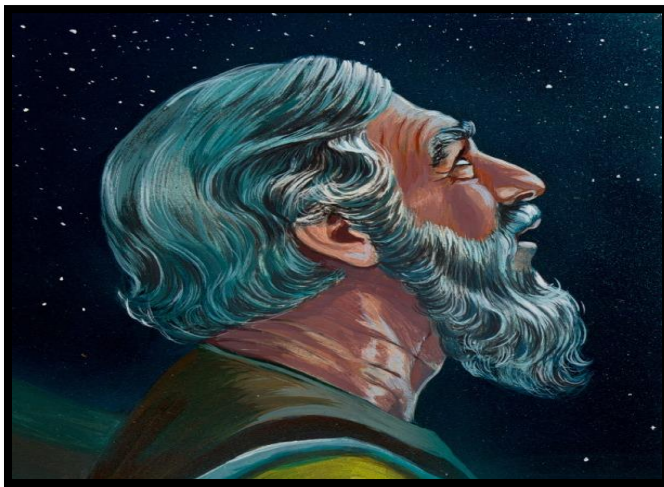
Longing for Home

Hebrews 11:13-16

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567

Whether one is taking a picture of the sandstone rock formation in Arizona; visiting one of six sky monasteries in Meteora, Greece; walking on the Great Wall of China, in the icy waters of Glacier National Park, Montana, or on the ocean floor of the Bay of Fundy, Canada; exploring the Pyramids of Giza, Egypt or the ancient Incan city Machu Piccu in Peru; admiring the spectacular colors of Reed Flute Caves in China or the beauty of the flowers in the Ashikaga Flower Park in Japan; on a romantic gondola ride in Venice, Italy or feeling the mist from Niagara Falls in Ontario ... there is no place like home! You know the place where one feels comfortable enough to be oneself and peaceful because the inhabitants truly love each another! Despite this warmth the eternity God has placed in our hearts can't help but make us restless and dream for the heavenly city we as Christians are about to inherit! Until that day we are not to live in friendship with the ways of this world but as foreigners and strangers whose light and righteousness is to shine and reflect the glory of God the Father in heaven. The following sermon is going to review Hebrews 11:13-16 to show how important it is for God's people to allow their future, eternal home to affect their inner faith and desire to become more like Jesus while exiled on this earth!

Faith Without Boundaries (verse 13)



All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.

Despite the heroes of the faith such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob¹ not receiving what God promised them, even in the face of death they still believed they would be fulfilled.² Even though the promises to Abraham had been partially fulfilled in the birth of Isaac,³ in his lifetime he did not see his offspring become as numerous as the “stars in the heavens or the sands on the

¹ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 553.

² Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 418–419.

³ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 419.

seashore” (Genesis 22:17) nor did he receive the land of Canaan promised to him (Genesis 12:1).⁴ While Isaac once sowed crops and Jacob “built a place for himself” (Genesis 33:17) in the land of Canaan neither one settled down in the land⁵ but considered themselves to be “pilgrims rather than residents.”⁶ The Patriarchs considered themselves to be foreigners and strangers of the promised land and “lived their lives under the controlling influence”⁷ that in the distant future⁸ their descendants would settle in the Promised Land. This conviction so strong that even when they took their last breaths, they never questioned the validity of the promises⁹ to one day be fulfilled for their descendants!

Even though many of the promises that God gives us will not be fulfilled in our lifetimes we are to be like the Patriarchs and live our lives with faith that what is “unseen” will later be “seen” and fulfilled.¹⁰ Just because a promise does not get fulfilled in one’s lifetime does not mean the promise has been broken.¹¹ For example, even though we do not know the day or hour (Matthew 24:26) a time is coming when Christ will return to take us to the place that is being prepared for us (John 14:1-4). This will be a glorious day for we will get to see every knee bow and tongue confess that Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:9-11). Until that day we are to be like Patriarchs and see ourselves as foreigners, strangers and exiles as we go about our daily lives. We



are not love the ways of this world (1 John

2:15) and the “old self” (Ephesians 4:22-24) but are to daily renew our minds by trying to live according to the righteousness (Romans 12:1-2) that we will one day receive in the presence of our Lord in the renewed Garden of Eden.

⁴ David L. Allen, [Hebrews](#), The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 553.

⁵ Leon Morris, [“Hebrews.”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 120–121.

⁶ Leon Morris, [“Hebrews.”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 120–121.

⁷ Donald A. Hagner, [Hebrews](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 193.

⁸ George Guthrie, [Hebrews](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 378.

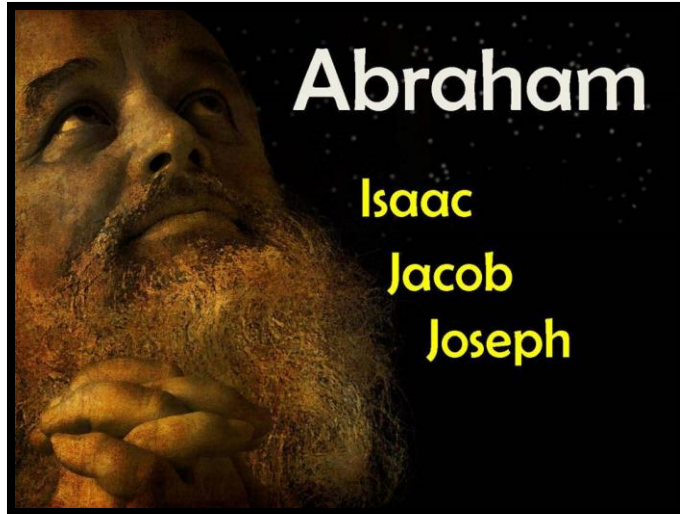
⁹ Peter T. O’Brien, [The Letter to the Hebrews](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 419.

¹⁰ Donald Guthrie, [Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 15, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 235.

¹¹ John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1990–1999\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

Foreigners and Strangers (verse 14-15)

¹⁴ People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return.



While one might think that the Patriarch's confession that they were "foreigners and strangers" in the land "reflected a nostalgic yearning to return to Mesopotamia,"¹² they had no intention of doing so. Even though Abraham could have returned to his homeland at any time¹³ he chose to stay as a wonderer and non-citizen without any rights¹⁴ and even had his wife Sarah and himself buried in the land of Canaan (Genesis 23:19; 25:9–10).¹⁵ Abraham did not allow the servant to take his son Isaac back to Mesopotamia to get his bride¹⁶ and Jacob despite having spent twenty years in his home region¹⁷ heard the voice of God to go back to the land of his fathers (Genesis

31:3).¹⁸ Even though their unsettled existence in Canaan gave them ample opportunity to go back to the home of their birth¹⁹ the Patriarchs refused to be "earthly minded" and return²⁰ but instead held onto the promise that a better home was being prepared for them in a heavenly city!

We too are aliens and strangers of this world and as such are to keep from being defiled by its sinful ways. Often the closer we get to God the more Satan tries to tempt us²¹ to give into

¹² Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 420.

¹³ Leon Morris, "Hebrews," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 121.

¹⁴ Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, eds., *John's Gospel, Hebrews–Revelation*, First Edition., The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary (Colorado Springs, CO; Paris, ON; Eastbourne: David C Cook, 2005), 242.

¹⁵ Leon Morris, "Hebrews," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 121.

¹⁶ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 299.

¹⁷ Leon Morris, "Hebrews," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 121.

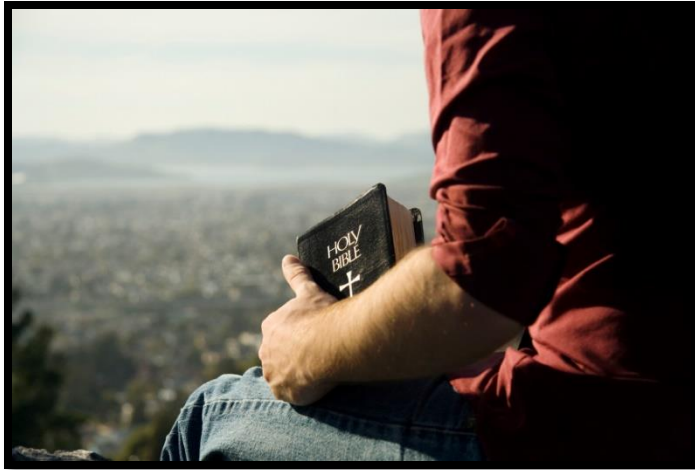
¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 420–421.

²⁰ Leon Morris, "Hebrews," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 121.

²¹ C. H. Spurgeon, "The Pilgrim's Longings," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 18 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1872), 27.

the sinful desires of our hearts that wage war against our souls.²² “If you want to go back to sin, to carnality, to a love of the world, to your old condition, you never need to be prevented from doing so by want of opportunities.”²³



While Satan loves the hypocrisy of the lukewarm, carnal Christian returning to “their old unregenerate,”²⁴ idolatrous ways²⁵ this is not to be an option for those whom have been bought at a price of the life of God’s own Son, Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:20). Those who are born again and have the Spirit of God living inside of them (John 3:5) are to be “out of sync”²⁶ with the ways of this world because their heart’s desire and focus is on doing what is right in God’s sight (Romans 12:2). True faith is one that

in the face of temptations chooses to put aside the temporary pleasures of self-gratification²⁷ to embrace a life of meditation and obedience to God’s word (James 1:22-25) so that one might store treasures in heaven that can be enjoyed for an eternity (Matthew 6:19-21).

Seeking an Eternal Home (verse 16)



Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Since the Patriarch’s desired and governed their lives with the promised, heavenly city in their focus; God was not ashamed to be called “their God”!²⁸ While a dead world with its earthly things and

²² George Guthrie, *Hebrews*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 379.

²³ C. H. Spurgeon, “*The Pilgrim’s Longings*,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 18 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1872), 28.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1990–1999)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

²⁷ C. H. Spurgeon, “*The Pilgrim’s Longings*,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 18 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1872), 29.

²⁸ John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1990–1999)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

vanities might satisfy a dead heart,²⁹ for the Patriarch's nothing but being in the city in the permanent foundations in heaven³⁰ in the presence of God would satisfy their thirst to be home! The promise of receiving a land "filled with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:17) was no where near as enticing to Abraham, Jacob and Isaac as entering a city where there would be no more hunger, sorrow, sickness or death and be able to see and talk to God face to face (Revelation 7:13-17, 21:4-8)! They knew humanity's most glorious "cities are the palest of imitations"³¹ of the restored Garden of Eden that they would inherit. Because they lived their lives as foreigners and strangers of the ways of this world with the belief God would come good on His promises even in the face of physical death,³² God gave the Patriarch's one of the greatest compliments ever given to humanity: "I am not ashamed to be called their God!"³³

In conclusion I want you to imagine what it will be like your last few days on this earth. Imagine being told by the doctor that you are being moved into one of the "special" rooms in the hospital and you have just a couple of days to live. Knowing that you are you not leaving the



room physically alive would certainly get one thinking about the meaning of life. Surely one would not be thinking about external things of life like one's house, car or bank account but about whether or not ones' soul is ready to meet one's Creator! You would most likely wonder "I have run the race, but have I run it well" and will I the moment I pass from this life to the next and go to heaven and hear the words "good and faithful servant" from my Lord, Savior and King? Since we only have one life to live and are unlikely to

know when we are going to die the only way that we can "finish well" in the eyes of Christ is to be like the Patriarch's and try and live the righteous life we are about to receive now in the present. I want to finish with one final question to ponder:

If I died today would God be ashamed to be called my God?

²⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, "[The Pilgrim's Longings](#)," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 18 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1872), 29.

³⁰ Paul Ellingworth and Eugene Albert Nida, [A Handbook on the Letter to the Hebrews](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 264.

³¹ Donald Guthrie, [Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 15, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 237.

³² Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, eds., [John's Gospel, Hebrews-Revelation](#), First Edition., The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary (Colorado Springs, CO; Paris, ON; Eastbourne: David C Cook, 2005), 243.

³³ John Piper, [Sermons from John Piper \(1990-1999\)](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).