

The Patriarchs: Faith for a City, Part 1 (Hebrews 11:13–16)

Well, I need to make a correction to something I said last week, and you know you're on a real good roll when you have to begin a sermon by correcting something you said last week. And that's the case this week. I made much out of the fact that the NIV has at verse 11 a reference to Abraham and not to Sarah, and I made a big explanation of that and explained why that was. And then after the service, Dave Rich texted me and he said, "How many people came up to you after the sermon and said that the NIV has Sarah at verse 11 and not Abraham?" And I was horrified and I said, "Nobody." And then I thought, "OK, he's just playing with me for making a comment about how he was going to preach that all the women in the congregation should call all the men in the congregation lord." I thought that's where he was going with it.

No, as it turns out, the modern translation, the modern editions of the NIV, have changed that to Sarah from Abraham. The one that I was consulting was the 1984 edition of the NIV. So if you were holding an NIV in your lap and you were utterly perplexed at everything I said for about fifteen minutes, the fault was mine. I should have consulted a more modern edition of the NIV. This isn't 1984. Actually, now that I say that, it feels a lot like 1984, doesn't it? Not the year, the book. We're making Orwell great again. So my apologies to you if you were utterly perplexed at everything I said last week.

Let's move on now to verses 13–16. It's been a while since we examined the definition of faith that we have in chapter 11, verse 1. And if you have joined us since that message or if you were not here for that message and you plan on sticking around for a couple more weeks or at least the rest of Hebrews 11, I would encourage you to go back and to listen to that message because it might be lost in your mind exactly what that definition of faith is and how it is worked out in our lives and what the author means when he says in verse 1, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." And really that definition sets before us the idea of faith that the author is working out through the rest of this chapter. And we have seen that definition at play and illustrated in the lives of Abel and then Noah and then Abraham, and we're going to see it in the life of Moses. All of these examples in Hebrews 11 demonstrate to us how that faith, how biblical faith, that gift that comes from God that saves us, is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen.

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You'll notice verse 1 describes things hoped for and not seen—that is, intangible things, unrealized things, things that we do not see right now, and things that we do not yet see. You see, there are things that we do not see now even though they are true now, they are happening now, they are present realities now. For instance, the resurrection of Christ is not something that you and I can behold with the physical eye. It's not a material thing that we can behold right now with our physical eyes, but it is nonetheless true. And it is something that faith enables us to embrace, to receive, and to trust. The intercession of Christ, the fact that He is even right now interceding for us at the Father's right hand, praying for us right now, that is something that we cannot behold with our physical eye, but it is something that the eyes of faith allow us to embrace.

The reality of Heaven and Hell. You and I do not visit Hell. We do not visit Heaven. We cannot see these things, but these are real, present verities that the eyes of faith behold. The forgiveness of our sins, our adoption into the family of God, even God's presence with us now. It is something that sometimes we can, in a spiritual sense, feel and sense. We can almost feel a supernatural presence with us in our day-to-day life, but it's not something that physically we can behold with the naked eye. Those are things that are presently true, present verities and realities, that are not beheld by us physically, but they are beheld by us spiritually with eyes of faith.

Then there are future verities, future realities, that we do not see now, but we behold those realities by faith as well. For instance, the return of Christ and the destruction of the nations, the coming kingdom and the subjection of all things to Him, our bodily resurrection, the establishment of David's kingdom and David's throne, the new heavens and the New Earth, these are all things that are yet future to us. Our eyes, our physical eyes, cannot see them. We cannot touch them. We cannot apprehend them with any physical sense. And yet, faith makes those future realities as present and real to us as any physical realities in the present world. That is what it means when the author says that faith is the substance of things hoped for and the conviction or evidence of things that we do not see.

Faith allows us to be sure of those things, to treat them with conviction, to be assured of them because faith rests, as it were, upon intangible things, or I should say faith allows us to rest upon intangible things as if they were actually tangible realities. Because it is with the eyes of faith that we see these things and we treat them, believe them, and feel as if they are real in the present even though they are not physically present or physically real to us in any tangible sense.

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So faith, rather than viewing the promises of God as being ethereal, mysterious vagaries with no significance in this present world, faith allows us to stand or rest or repose ourselves upon things that are immaterial and to do so just as easily and just as confidently and just as assuredly as you rest and repose yourself upon the chair in which you sit. Just as real as the chair in which you sit. Faith allows us to apprehend those things and to rest upon them because it is the substance of what we hope for. So faith treats unseen verities as if they're actually seen.

And now we're going to see this explained in verses 13–16. There are phrases that are used here which really describe and define faith in different words than what we have in verse 1 but also illustrated in the life of Abraham and the other patriarchs. Verse 13:

13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

14 For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.

15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.

16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.
(NASB)

These verses describe for us, illustrate for us, that definition of faith in verse 1 in the life of the patriarchs. And then we see those realities, the substance, the evidence, the conviction, the things unseen described in other words and lived out in the life of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Particularly those are the ones we have in mind.

So we see first of all in verses 13 and 14, the faith of an exile. Look again at verse 13: “All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.” The “all these” there at the beginning of verse 13 does not refer to the entire list of saints that we have in Hebrews 11 going back to Abel and Enoch and Noah. It is not those saints that are in view here. “All these” refers specifically to the narrower context of Abraham and Sarah and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph, those that are

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mentioned immediately prior to this and immediately after these verses. How would I know that? Because not all these in Hebrews 11 died in faith, did they? One of them never died, remember? Enoch? He didn't taste death. So he's not included in this. He has in mind here those who died in faith having not received, as he says in verse 13, all these promises.

And the word here is in faith and not by faith. You'll notice in the rest of the chapter that he uses that phrase “by faith.” By faith, Abel offered a sacrifice. By faith, Noah built an ark. All the rest of these patriarchs and the rest of the references refer to “by faith” and not “in faith.” That is because when he describes somebody doing something by faith, faith becomes the motivating influence or the effect, the thing that sort of energized their labor, their obedience, their work. But Abraham didn't die by faith. In other words, it wasn't faith that made him die, but he died in a state of faith. It was in that condition of faith. That is to say that on his deathbed, Abraham, even then, having not received the promises, died in a state of believing that those promises were true and trusting that He is faithful who had promised. So faith did not leave him. Abraham didn't get within two or three years at the end of his life and say, “Well, I guess God is not faithful after all. Here I am facing death. I'm getting into my closing years, and He hasn't given me these promises. I haven't seen a multitude of nations come from me. I haven't seen princes and kings come from me. And I certainly haven't been given all of this land from the river of Egypt to the river of Euphrates. So that must mean that God is not faithful.” He didn't die in a state of unbelief or in questioning. It was in a state of resolved faith that Abraham died.

And the same would be said true of Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. And we're going to see this later on. Joseph so believed in the promise of God to give them the land, Joseph so believed in it that Joseph gave orders concerning his bones and said, “Do not leave me buried in Egypt. You take my bones with you when God pulls you up out of here, back to the land.” They died in a state of faith. And the immediate context here is describing Abraham, Sarah, and the children, not everybody in that list.

Now, which promises is it in verse 13 that they did not receive? All these died without receiving the promises. What promises is he talking about? I've kind of played my hand a little bit or at least showed you my hand a little bit as to what promises I think he's describing here. It's interesting, John Owen, whom I normally consider to be a very able expositor and one with whom I take issue very reservedly, I should say—he's one of the Puritans. He has a commentary on Hebrews that's about this long on my shelf. It's

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enormous. There are two volumes that are just introduction to the book. It's a tremendous exposition of Hebrews. John Owen says, concerning these promises, that what Abraham was hoping for or looking for was the messianic hope, the promise of a Messiah, the promise of a Christ. And he denies that this is a promise regarding the land. In fact, John Owen says that there are some who would suggest that the promise that Abraham never received was this promise of the land from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates. And then Owen says nothing could be further from the author's mind, that idea.

Now, I would suggest to you that that might have been on the author's mind because I go back to verse 8. Verse 8 says, "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to [a what?] a place which he was to receive for an inheritance." It was the inheritance that Abraham went out to receive.

8 And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

9 By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise [What promise? The promise of a land, a promised land];

10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

11 By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. (Heb. 11:8–11 NASB)

What had He promised? Two things specifically that are in our context that have been the focus for the last number of weeks, the land and the seed, the promised seed. Isaac and his descendants and all of the multitude that would come from that. So Abraham was promised a land and he was promised a nation that would come from him. Those are the two promises that the author has in mind. He has been working through those two promises. It is something of a, I believe, a clumsy attempt to avoid the clear implication of the text to suggest that what is really being described here is the messianic hope since that has not been brought up and it's not described later on in the passage. Joseph, when he said, "Hey, take my bones up from here into the land to which God is going to bring you," did not have in mind some messianic hope in terms of the arrival of the Messiah, but he did have in mind a messianic hope in terms of what? The

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giving of the land and what that would mean for the terraforming of the land and the kingdom that was to come. That is what those men had in mind, not just the arrival or the appearance of the Messiah.

Abraham—here's the fact. Abraham never received in his lifetime all that he was promised. He got to live in the land. That's true, right? He got to live in the land. He got to enjoy some of the land, tour around, see it, do commerce in the land. Abraham was buried in the land, but he never possessed it. He never possessed it. He never walked all the way through that Arabian Peninsula and toured all the way through the land. He had a very limited course that he went through that land. He did enjoy some of it. He was living in that for a hundred years, but he never possessed that. He never received that promise in his own lifetime. Abraham did see his son and his grandsons, but he never saw nations come from him. So he saw the initial promises and fulfillments of those promises, but not the full fulfillment of those promises, never in his lifetime. What he was looking for eventually was what is mentioned in verses 10 and 16, this heavenly country, this heavenly city. And by that I mentioned a couple of weeks ago that we're not talking about a city in Heaven or a country in Heaven but a city and a country in that land that had heavenly characteristics. Abraham was waiting for Heaven to come to earth, not for him to go to Heaven to receive those promises.

But notice the conflict in the phrases, “All these died in faith, without receiving the promises” (Heb. 11:13). They did not receive the promises, and this is particularly striking in light of verse 11 where it says that Sarah “considered Him faithful who had promised.” She believed that He who had promised is faithful. Get that in your mind. She believed that He who had promised is faithful, and they died without receiving the promises. Do you see the conflict between those two sentences? If they died without receiving the promises, how could He who promised be faithful? There is a real strain there between those two sentences because it boggles our mind that somebody could trust in One to keep His promises and then die having never received that promise.

Now if I made a promise to one of my children, then they ended up dying before they ever saw that promise, the last thing that you would think of me is that even though I had the ability to fulfill that promise and I did not fulfill that promise all the way up and they died without ever receiving that promise—you would never think that I was faithful to what I had promised if they died having never received the promises. And yet they affirm that God is faithful, He who promised is faithful, He will do it, and He is faithful to keep His Word. And yet they died without ever receiving those promises.

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Is this because of some lack in God? Was He trying to keep His promises? Was He trying to be faithful? Did God give it His best effort, make every effort that He could, trying to keep His Word, but ultimately failed to do so? And if God failed to keep His promise to Abraham to give him that land in his lifetime, was it due to a lack of God's ability? Was it due to a lack of God's wisdom? A lack of knowledge? A lack of foresight? What exactly did God lack that He was not able to fulfill His Word to Abraham in his lifetime?

Does this in any way impugn God's faithfulness, that what He promised to Abraham, Abraham died without receiving? It would impugn God's faithfulness only if Abraham will never receive what He has promised. That would impugn God's faithfulness. It would impugn God's faithfulness if God promised Abraham, "You will receive it before you die," but God didn't promise Abraham that. God promised Abraham that He would receive it but indicated to Abraham that Abraham would receive that fulfillment of promise after he died. Genesis 15:13–16:

13 God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.

14 But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.

15 As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age.

16 Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete." (NASB)

So Abraham dwelt in the land, lived in the land, did commerce in the land, enjoyed some of the benefits of the land without ever possessing the land in its entirety. And yet God revealed to him that ultimately he would possess that land, but it would not be before he died. Abraham would see his deathbed and he would lie on his deathbed having never received in this life what it was that he was promised. But that did not deter Abraham, nor does it suggest that God is not faithful to His Word. Why? There is a key. This key is what we're about to celebrate in four weeks, and it is the doctrine of resurrection. The doctrine of resurrection is the key to the Abrahamic covenant. It is the key to the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham and to all the Old Testament saints. The doctrine of the resurrection is the key.

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Abraham believed in a God who raises the dead. Hebrews 11:17–19:

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;

18 it was he to whom it was said, “In Isaac your descendants shall be called.”

19 He [that is, Abraham] considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead. (NASB)

When Abraham was told to offer up Isaac, the idea that he would sacrifice Isaac and kill Isaac, his only son, the son of promise, did not deter Abraham at all. In fact, his faith is made evident in the fact that he was ready to grab that knife and raise it over his son and sacrifice him as God had commanded him. Why would Abraham be able to do that? Because he believed that if this is the child of promise and this is the one whom God has said will inherit these promises, I can kill this son because I believe in a God who raises the dead.

And the same thing, death, is no hurdle to the fulfillment of the land promises. Because Abraham can lie on his deathbed having never received the totality of that land and say to himself, “I believe in a God who raises the dead. So even if I don't receive those promises in this life, there is a life to come in which those promises will be fulfilled.” And Abraham believed that, he trusted that because he knew that God is able to raise the dead. Resurrection is the key.

The coming kingdom and the resurrection of the just is going to fulfill all three of these covenants with their promises. The Abrahamic promise with the land and all that it entails is going to be fulfilled in that final millennial kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Davidic covenant with the promise of the King and the kingdom is going to be fulfilled in that kingdom. And the new covenant, which is the promise of bodily resurrection, eternal life, spiritual life, the indwelling of the Spirit, and perfect obedience, that is all going to be fulfilled in that kingdom. So you have the Abrahamic covenant that promised a land, a kingdom promised to David, and a resurrection and spiritual life promise in the new covenant. And these three covenants all come together and they are all fulfilled coterminously in the great millennial kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ in that resurrection. This is what we wait for.

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We're not expecting God to fulfill all of His promises to us in this life because there are verities and realities that are yet to come, and upon those we set our hope. And so we then are not disappointed or discouraged, nor do we lose heart, and we are not deterred if indeed we suffer in this world and we lose everything in this world and we die in this world. And we're not trying to Christianize this world in the sense of ushering in some kingdom. We are waiting until He returns. "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this" (Isa. 9:7).

Bodily resurrection is the Old Testament hope. Bodily resurrection is the new covenant hope. Bodily resurrection is our only and ultimate hope for the fulfillment of all these promises. He can die in faith, having never received the promises, because he believes in the God who will raise the dead. I'm convinced that Abraham understood that even though this body of death might perish, he would stand in that land between those two rivers and possess and see and live in a city in that land just as God had promised it to him because he believed in the God who raises the dead.

Now look at the rest of verse 13 where we describe how it is that his faith sustained him. "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but [look at these three phrases] having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth." Three phrases there to describe the way that faith sustained Abraham. Notice that he died without receiving the promises, but he saw them—or "having seen them." How do you see promises? That's kind of odd language, isn't it? It's a little curious. I might promise you something that might be unbelievable and you wouldn't say to me, "Yeah, I see that promise." Right, you might say, "I will believe that when I see it." I'll believe that when I see it. Because we don't typically speak of seeing promises. We typically speak of seeing the fulfillment of promises, the reality of promises, the culmination of the promise. That's what we see. We see when the promise is fulfilled, not necessarily seeing the promise itself.

Well, that statement, that he saw the promises, makes no sense apart from the definition in verse 1 that we spent a little bit of time looking at. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). There is a sense in which Abraham did see the promise, but how did he see the promise? It's not the promise itself that he saw, but having received that promise and understood what the promise entailed and what it was that he was being given, Abraham with eyes of faith was able to look at that promise and see not just the promise but ultimately the

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fulfillment of the promise. Faith made that promise as real to Abraham in his soul, in his spirit, and in his mind and heart as if he had already possessed that. Faith gives substance to the promise itself. So in that sense, we do see the promise.

Noah was warned of a global flood, things not yet seen. Noah believed that promise of God that there would be a global flood and that if he built the ark his family would be saved. Noah believed that as much on the day that God told him that as he did on the day that the door of the ark was shut and it started to rain. Abraham saw what had not yet been seen because he was promised that by God, and Noah considered Him faithful who had promised, and he believed. Abraham, having never seen the land to which he went, got up and left, saw the city from Heaven, saw his possessions, saw the ultimate fulfillment of that, not physically with the physical eye but spiritually with the eye of faith because faith gives substance to that.

I ask you, Can you see the promises that you are promised for the life that is to come? Can you see in your mind's eye your bodily resurrection? You will never suffer anyone in this world to take this life from you and destroy this body in which you currently live unless you can see clearly in your mind's eye that there is a bodily resurrection to come. You have to be able to see that with clarity, to know and to understand that someday we will be raised in bodies like unto that one in which the Lord Jesus Christ was raised. If you can see in your mind's eye the kingdom, the glory, the possessions, the righteousness and the justice and the holiness of that final day, if you can see that, then you will suffer yourself the loss of all things in this life for the sake of Christ if God should call you to give everything up. Because you can see in your mind's eye that the glories of that age are greater than the glories of this age.

That is why Moses was willing and able to leave behind him Egypt and all of the treasures. Why? Because he considered the sufferings of Christ more beneficial, the hope of that messianic age greater than all the treasures of Egypt and all of the passing pleasures of sin. Moses was willing to turn his back on the greatest kingdom of the world at that time, all of its wealth, all of its pleasures, and all of its treasures, for the age that is to come.

And if you cannot see that in your mind's eye, then you will constantly struggle with, "What should I sacrifice? What can I give up?" This is what it means to fix your hope on the glory that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. This is what it means to set your mind on things above and not on things on this earth, that we, you

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and I, see by faith. Not just, yeah, I understand what is promised, but I can see in my mind's eye, by the eye of faith, I can see the fulfillment of that. And on top of that, you and I are willing to live in light of that fulfillment, denying ourselves here, sacrificing ourselves here, giving up of ourselves here, serving here because of what lies ahead. But you have to be able to see that with the eyes of faith first, having seen them, having seen the promises. Why? Because there is substance, there is evidence, there is conviction. And Abraham had it.

Look at the second phrase, “having welcomed” (Heb. 11:13). That word actually describes a greeting. It describes a happy and welcoming reception, a kindly greeting or welcoming something with joy. It has the idea of saluting something because you're acknowledging that it's there, so you're giving a salute, you're welcoming it. The picture is one of a joyful, anticipatory reception where your arms are open wide. It is the idea that you have an expectation of the arrival of something, and so you are welcomingly, kindly, and joyfully greeting the arrival of this thing. Abraham saw the promise and he greeted it from a distance with arms wide open, with the anticipation not only of the arrival of this thing that he was promised but also the joy that would come as a result of the fulfillment of that promise. That's the idea.

Picture for yourself little kids who haven't seen Grandma and Grandpa for a long time. And they're told that Grandma and Grandpa are going to show up on such and such a day. And of course I'm assuming that they would have a good relationship with Grandma and Grandpa and that Grandma and Grandpa showing up wouldn't be an onerous burden to them. But they're expecting Grandma and Grandpa to show up, and they haven't seen them in a long time. They're going to arrive on a certain day. And the kids, when Grandma and Grandpa finally make an appearance and they see them, even though they might be on the other side of the airport terminal or on the other side of the train station, the kids would have their arms wide open. And they would be joyfully, expectantly, happily receiving Grandma and Grandpa, waiting until they got there. And they've been anticipating this the whole time, ready to receive Grandma and Grandpa, ready to welcome them because they're anticipating not just the arrival of Grandma and Grandpa but, this is key, the joy that would come to them with the arrival of Grandma and Grandpa. That is the essence of this idea.

Abraham saw the promises and he welcomed them from across the airport terminal, as it were, from a distance. But of course, this distance is not space, this distance is time. It's important that you understand that because, see, Abraham was in the land. There

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was no distance between him and the land, was there? He was standing on it. There was distance between him and receiving the land. And that distance so far has been roughly about four thousand years. So there's a distance in time that is being described here. But Abraham, even in his own life, with his arms wide open, embraced and was ready to receive with joy that blessing, that fulfillment, and to do so joyfully, experiencing even that joy.

What allowed Abraham to be able to do that? It was faith. It is the substance of things hoped for, the conviction and the reality, the evidence, of things that are not yet seen. You see, by faith, Abraham tasted the joy and the happiness of what was promised, even though he never received it in his life. Faith takes the joys and the delights of the future and brings them into the present because we see the promises and we live our lives in light of those promises, believing them, trusting them, reposing ourselves upon them as if they're actually substantively present with us today. That's what faith does. We do this by faith. Faith serves this function. Faith brings a measure of future joys to the present. It brings a portion of future happiness to today, and it ultimately allows us to sample the future fulfillment of that promise because we believe so solidly in our hearts that that promise is true and that God will fulfill it because we consider Him faithful who has promised. And therefore our hearts are filled with joyful anticipation even though we welcome the promises from afar. There are still promises that will be kept to us. We're looking at them from a distance now, time-wise, and we're waiting for the fulfillment, and yet our hearts can be filled with joy and anticipation and welcoming gladness today.

Third, “having confessed” (Heb. 11:13). This word means to speak the same as or to agree or to admit or to say along with somebody, proclaiming something. And it actually has the idea of professing something or proclaiming it vocally, publicly, unashamedly. It's just announcing to somebody what? Verse 13: I am a stranger and an exile on the earth. Now this again feels like something that's contradictory to the whole context, right? He's filled with joy as if he possesses the land while he is confessing with his mouth that he does not possess the land. That just seems to create sparks when you put those two sentences together, doesn't it? There is the joy of experiencing it without experiencing it. He saw it, he welcomed it, all the while confessing, “This does not yet belong to me. But I live like it belongs to me. I trust like it belongs to me. I'm living for the life to come as if it belongs to me, but it doesn't yet belong to me.”

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Confessing that he is a stranger and an alien—similar words here, and they share some meaning. Each paints a slightly different picture. The word *alien*, from the word *xenos*, means outsider, one who does not belong, a stranger, a foreigner, somebody who does not fit in, somebody who doesn't belong there. They're different. Maybe they're different in their language, different in their skin color, different in their culture. They're just the odd man out, they're in a place where they just don't belong. You can kind of notice just by looking at them that this guy's not one of us. That's the word that's used here. It was a pejorative. Strangers in those times were often hated, viewed with suspicion or contempt because they were different, and they weren't trusted. This was not something that you wanted to be true of you, and it was not something that, in that day, you would have liked to readily admit. And yet here's the language. He confessed and proclaimed, "I'm an alien and an exile. I'm an alien and a stranger. I'm not welcome here. I'm the one who's often hated. I'm the foreigner. And I'm just sojourning."

Also in that time aliens had few rights. This is not something that you wanted to be true of you and not even something that you would like to readily admit is true of you. But Abraham proclaimed that. "Yeah, this is not my land. Not yet. It's not my home. Not yet. This doesn't belong to me. Not yet. And yet I'm living here, joyfully confessing that these things are true, happy in my heart, gladly looking forward to and enjoying the joy of the blessing that is to come."

And an exile—and that word is one that described one who was passing through or a wanderer, somebody who went about from place to place. This is the word that you would use to describe somebody who was passing through a territory and was maybe staying in a place, lodging in a place temporarily but maybe for a bit of an extended period of time, somebody who is a stranger. This is not their land, but they're just passing through this land. Both of these words are used here to describe Abraham. He confessed that he was a stranger, the odd man out, not welcomed there, and also an exile on the earth. This he gladly proclaimed.

Genesis 23:4—this comes from the time after Sarah had died. Abraham began to negotiate for the purchase of a burial plot for Sarah. And he said to the owners, "I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me a burial site among you that I may bury my dead out of my sight." They tried to give him the land. Abraham insisted on buying it for the fair market price. And so he bought that land. He didn't claim it was his. He didn't say, "Yeah, I'll take it from you gladly for free because God has promised me this land anyway and I'm going to possess all of it." No, he bought that land because he

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understood what? I'm a sojourner, an exile, and a stranger here. He did not want to act as if he had any right to that land in that life because he didn't want to approach the people around there as if God had given it to him right then because by then Abraham knew, *As long as I'm here, I am a stranger and a sojourner*. So that's an example of Abraham gladly confessing this, admitting it. In terms of that land and at that time he was a stranger without any rights and without a home. He had no claim to that land apart from God's promise to give it to him eventually. And he understood that he would not possess it in this life.

And this is the same kind of language that's used of you and I, by the way. We need to remind ourselves every so often that this world is not our home. We should be viewed with suspicion by the world. Right? The minute the world looks at us and says, "That's the kind of Christian that I want around me," that's when we should start to say, "Am I doing something wrong? Am I doing something wrong that I would fit in in this wicked and corrupt and lost and demonic system? There must be something wrong with me if I feel at home here and they feel at home with me here." They should view us with suspicion. They should not trust us. They should look at us and say, "You are inexplicable. I do not understand anything about your values, your priorities, your worldview. I don't understand anything about why you live the way that you do, how you live the way that you do, or why you're living for the One for whom you're living. I don't get it." Unbelievers should look at us in that way.

1 Peter 2:11: "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul." This age does not belong to us. It doesn't. Our goal is not to try and Christianize it. I'm not saying we shouldn't present the gospel. We should. To every creature. We just had a presentation this morning where we talked about the necessity of doing that. But we do that understanding that nothing in this age is ours. Everything in the age to come is ours. And we can gladly wait for that. And we can die in faith having not yet received that promise if we can see with our mind's eye the promises that God has given to us and if we can welcome them from a distance of time, as it were, and enjoy a little taste of the kingdom joys and treasures here in this world as we anticipate that with joy. And we can confess, all the while doing that, that we are aliens and strangers in this world and that this world is not our home.

Abraham lived in that land for a hundred years and he never possessed a single square foot of that land except for the burial plot that he bought for himself and Sarah and his family. That's it. That's all he ever owned. The only part of that land that Abraham

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actually ever possessed was the land that he possessed in his death. Think about that. It's almost as if Abraham knew, *I will possess none of this land in this life, but through death and in death, I will possess all of this land.* So he didn't possess anything to live on. He only possessed the land that he died on and was buried in. Why? Because he was looking forward to the resurrection and God granting him the fulfillment of all those promises.

Hebrews 11:14: “For those who say such things [such things that Abraham was saying—“I am an exile, I am a stranger”] make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.” We're seeking something, an age, a kingdom, a land, that is not in this world, it's not of this world, it's not part of this age. It is part of the age to come. That's our fatherland, that's our homeland. That is what we are waiting for and anticipating. So those who say in this world and in this age, “I am a stranger, I am an alien,” those of us who are willing to confess that openly and boldly and yet have joy in this life, we are making it clear to everyone around us that this entire world can be consumed with flames, this entire world can be destroyed, but ultimately my hope is not here. It's not here in this government and these rulers, it's not here in this age at all. My hope is in the age to come. That's what I see, that's what I confess, that's what I gladly receive joy from—the fulfillment of that promise in the age to come. Our fatherland is not here. Our fatherland, our citizenship, is in the age that is to come. And again, we're going to look at this when we look at the reward in verse 16.

Next week, we're going to see that what is anticipated, the city and the country, is not something in Heaven, it is something that comes from Heaven to earth in that land, in that kingdom, in that coming age. And we'll look at that next week.

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