

Children of the City

Some people believe that if we are heavenly-minded, we'll be no earthly good. No, to be heavenly-minded will make you much earthly good. We need to know about heaven.

Others say, "Let's forget about heaven and just be occupied here on the earth." No, the Bible says to set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth. You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:2-3)

The Old Testament speaks about heaven. Abraham knew about that heavenly city, which is why he lived in a tent. He was probably the wealthiest man on the face of the earth at that time and he was living in a tent. God gave him the Promised Land and said, "This is yours." But he lived on the land in a tent like a squatter. The Bible says he was like a pilgrim and a stranger in his own land. (Hebrews 11:13) Here was a man who had so many gold piles, silver piles, and cattle running into each other. Abraham could have built the Taj Mahal if he wanted to. I often wonder why Sarah was such a problem. It's probably because he had all that money and wouldn't build her a house. He just lived in a tent week after week.

How would you like to buy two or three hundred acres, put up a tent, and move around on the land every week? Once a week you put the tent up; the next week you tear it down. Put it up; tear it down. Move to the front; move to the back. Move to middle; move to the side. What a hectic life that would be, and if someone came along and asked, "Why are you doing this?" you would say, "To prove that earth is not my home. Heaven is my home."

That's why Abraham did it. He said, "I'm seeking for a city." Even his lifestyle said, "I have no bounds on me in this earth. You can't tie me down. This may be my Promised Land, but the only thing that I have really secure is heaven." I want you to know that nothing you have on this earth is yours. It's going to be used by someone else. You're only borrowing it while you're here. That nice sweet house you live in, someone else is going to move into it after you, paint the walls chartreuse, pour cement in your pool, and let the weeds grow. Not everything you strive to keep so nice will be that way forever. One of these days you're going to be gone and someone else is going to move into your house. Someone is going to drive your car because you only have it for a short time while you're here. We are temporary residents on this earth. The Bible says we are in the world but not of the world. Therefore, despite all the riches Abraham had, he knew that what Job said is true. You came into this world naked, you're going to leave this world naked, and whatever you have here is just temporary. (Job 1:21) The only things you are going to take to heaven are the promises of God and the souls you've saved. There is nothing in the physical, tangible world around us that we can take to heaven.

I heard about a rich man that died and a couple of people were standing over his coffin, looking in and saying, "Well, how much did he leave?" The other person said, "All of it."

You can't take any of it with you. There is nothing wrong with prosperity. Thank God for prosperity, but if you are hanging on to your prosperity and embracing that money, then you're wrong. You aren't supposed to do that.

Hebrews 12:13 says, "These all died in faith." It is important to understand that if Jesus doesn't return, we're all going to die. Nobody wants to think about death, but if Jesus doesn't come in our lifetime, we're going to die. The Bible says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:8.)

When I went to my twentieth high school reunion, they asked me to open up in prayer and pray over the meal. I prayed, but also made sure the Gospel was presented. We were the generation that was going to change the world through peace. We were going to stop all the wars and just have peace. We marched for peace in Washington and on college campuses, letting the world know we were going to change the world. I pointed out that it is amazing how all the things we wanted to change stayed the same, and all the things we wanted to stay the same have changed. We were all going to keep our hair and our figures and, most importantly, we weren't going to act like our parents. Now we all act like our parents, we are losing our hair, and our figures aren't quite the same as they were twenty years ago. No matter how much we marched and burned draft cards, there are still wars going on today. You begin to see there are other things that don't change. Everyone at the reunion was thinking the same thing, "We're almost 40 years old. Half our life is over." Suddenly, those who thought they were going to stay young forever realized there are things in life you just can't change.

You just can't stop time and the changes it brings. This verse says they all died in faith. If faith is a great way to live, then it is a great way to die. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. To live is Christ, but to die is gain. (Philippians 1:21) Am I saying dying is better? Yes! Why hang on to the things of life when you have an eternal city waiting for you?

You can pour the best foundation for your home, but it is still a temporary foundation. One of these days the whole earth is going to be destroyed. Did you know there are three earths? There's an earth that used to be, there's an earth today, and there's an earth yet to come. So no matter how secure your foundation is for your house, it is going to be gone one of these days. Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker was God, Who has secure foundations. It's the only thing real in your life. Nothing you possess in this lifetime is real or lasting. The only thing that is real and lasting is heaven. You have a home up there you're always going to have. You have foundations that will always be there. You have possessions in heaven you will always have. That's why the Word of God says to set your affections, your mind, your thoughts, your thinking on things above, not on things of this earth. You're dead to the things of this earth. Your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Continuing in Hebrews 11:13, *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off."* Many of the promises they received were yet to come. Abraham lived and died before many of the promises given to him came to pass. In fact, there are promises given to Abraham that have yet to come to pass: possession of the land promised to him and Jesus sitting on the throne. Some of them were promised down through David, but all of them were given to Abraham under the Abrahamic Covenant. He saw many of these things afar off, yet died before they came to pass.

People often ask me, "Why do we study about prophecy in the church? We aren't even going to be here when much of it happens. We studied about the Second Advent of the Lord, but we're not even going to be on the earth when Jesus comes back to establish His millennial reign. Why study about the Millennium? Those things are yet to come."

It's because the promises of God and all the Word of God was given by God. Every bit of it is profitable and even if there are things that are long past our generation, we need to study them. Abraham embraced these promises.

It goes on to say, "He received the promises, having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." Do not embrace things. Embrace the Word. Embrace His promises. God's Word is the only secure thing you have in this life. Don't embrace your car, your home, your possessions, your bank account, your kids, or anything else around you. Those things are nice and are good to have, but they are not to be embraced. The things you're to put your arms around and embrace, and what you will carry throughout all of eternity, are the promises of God — promises which are for you today, promises which are for the future, promises which are even beyond your life. You are to embrace them, believe them, and hold on to them.

The last part of verse 13 says, "They embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Do you know what you are to this earth? A stranger—a pilgrim. You're just passing through. You were once in the world and were a stranger to God, but there came a day when you switched kingdoms and you're no longer a stranger to God. You're in the household of faith. You're a child of God — the world is a stranger to you and you're a stranger to it. You're just passing through.

Everything about your lifestyle should reflect the fact that you are going to heaven. Your confession should be "I'm just a stranger and a pilgrim here," just as it was for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Three generations in the Promised Land, living in tents with enough money to buy the place, yet they wandered around as pilgrims. When people asked them 'Why?' they said, "Because I have a real home waiting for me, and I'm not going to settle down until I get there. In the meantime, my lifestyle is a testimony of the fact that I have home prepared for me in heaven." Your everyday life should be a reflection of the fact that you are here for a short while. You should have possessions, but you should have a loose hold on those possessions and give them into the kingdom of God, give them to people who have need around you, and understand that you have a home in heaven waiting for you, which is eternal.

I heard a story one time about an old man who came home on a ship. He had been in the missionary field for years, preaching the Gospel, and had not been home for many years. He lived in the time of Teddy Roosevelt and when he came back home, Teddy Roosevelt was on the ship with him. Teddy Roosevelt had been on a safari in Africa. As President, he had guards all around him. People all over the ship were milling around Teddy Roosevelt. They arrived in New York harbor and let down the gangplank. In the middle of the street, they had a tickertape parade waiting for him. The streets were lined with people. This man stood on the ship and watched Teddy Roosevelt walk

down the gangplank, get into his car, and drive off down the street as people were throwing confetti out the windows and making a big deal out of it. After it was all over, this old man was still standing there on the deck of the ship. No one was there to meet him. He began to cry and said, "God, look at that. Teddy Roosevelt comes home and everybody is here to meet him. His friends are here and the streets are lined with people that don't even know him. I've been over there doing Your work for years. I come back home and there's no one here waiting for me." Suddenly, the Spirit of God spoke to him and said, "You haven't come home." He said, "Wait 'til you see the tickertape parade I have for you when you really come home."

Let men have their parades. We haven't come home yet. But when we come home, we're coming home to an eternal home and our lifestyle every day should be a confession to the world that we're embracing the real things, the promises of God. Men out there are embracing things that fall out of their arms. They are embracing the economy as it goes up and down. They embrace their businesses and they go under. They embrace the things of this life: possessions, cars, homes, and wealth, but they're only temporary. They're only here for awhile. Embrace the only things that will carry you through this life and right on into eternity, which are the promises of God.

Hebrews 11:14-15:

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

Literally, if they had kept on remembering the country from which they came, they might have had an opportunity to return. I'm going to prove to you out of this verse of scripture you should have your mind on heaven. Don't get your mind on this earth. Keep your mind on heaven because the more you keep it on this earth, the more tempted you are to go back into the things of this earth. Thank God for prosperity, but keep your eyes on the Giver of prosperity, not on the prosperity itself. Keep your eyes on Jesus. He's the One who gives. Keep your eyes on God the Father for every good and perfect gift comes down from Him, from the Father of Lights. There is no variableness in Him, no shadow of turning with God. (James 1:17) Keep your eyes on Him.

This verse says if Abraham would have kept thinking about Ur of the Chaldees, he could have gone back. But there came a point in his life where he forsook Egypt, totally cut it off, and said, "I'll never go back." Abraham said of Ur of the Chaldees, Mesopotamia, I will never go back. He set his eyes on the Promised Land and he kept his eyes on the Promised Land, kept his mind on the Promised Land, and even when he got to the Promised Land, he looked far beyond the Promised Land to another land, and plainly declared that he sought a country.

Hebrews 11:16:

But now they desire a better county, that is an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Although they might have had an opportunity to have returned, they now desire a better country, a heavenly country. It says God is not ashamed or embarrassed to be called their God: for he has prepared them a city. Is God embarrassed when you call Him Father? Is He embarrassed to call you His child? If you have your mind on the things of this earth and you are so wrapped up with earthly possessions, God's ashamed to call you His child. You're definitely His child, but have you ever been in a store when your kids are acting up and you didn't want to claim your kid? Everybody around says, "Whose brats are those?" You say, "Don't look at me! They're not mine!" What do you think happens when we're down here on this earth, bought by the blood of Jesus, headed toward heaven, and our affections are set on the things of this earth? Heaven belongs to us. The greatest possessions anyone could ever have are lying in store for us in heaven and we are wrapped up with the things of the earth. What a let-down to God the Father when He's preparing you a city up there that is eternal. We need to set our affections, our mind, and our thinking on that city.

The faith that is talked of in Hebrews 11 is not the faith in the heart; this is the act of faith. This is what James talked about when he said faith without works is dead. (James 2:17) Every one of these things in Hebrews 11 is an act of faith, the pinnacle of their faith. By faith, Abraham forsook. By faith, Noah built an ark. Chapter 11 is all the works of faith, what they did with their faith.

So now we come to Moses and his lifestyle. What did he do to show that he was going to that city which is heaven?

Hebrews 11:23-24:

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

What caused him to refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter?

Hebrews 11:25-26:

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

It is one thing to look at the prosperity of God and consider that better than the prosperity of man. It is another thing to think, "I may never get a thing out of this life except persecution, but even that is greater riches than what the world has to give."

When he forsook Egypt, Moses said, "I don't care if they persecute me. I don't care if I face the next 80 years of my life in persecution. I don't care if I live 120 years, 150 years, or 200 years and all I get is persecution," he said, "that is greater riches than what Egypt could give me."

How did Moses think that persecution is greater riches! Look at verse 26. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. The word recompense means paycheck. Every two weeks you want a recompense for your time working in the office. There's going to be a day when we stand in heaven and we're going to get our recompense. We're going to get our paycheck, and he says, "I know there's something better waiting for me. If all I get is persecution in this life, it doesn't matter. I've got a home in heaven where I have a paycheck that's going to last forever."

No wonder he considered it greater riches. Even if he got the riches of Egypt, it only lasted for a few years. He had eternal riches waiting for him in heaven.

I'm not preaching against prosperity. Thank God for prosperity, but get your eyes off of it and get it on to the heavens God has prepared for you. The Word of God says it is He that gives you power to get wealth so His Covenant can be established on this earth. (Deuteronomy 8:18) Thank God He gives things, but I would still follow God if He never gave me anything. I don't follow Him for His possessions; I follow Him for love. Moses even came to this point and we know Moses was prosperous. God blessed him continuously just as he did Abraham. God blessed Abraham because he considered himself as dust and ashes and that is what you need to consider yourself to be. There's something better waiting for us past this life and it is heaven. Moses was looking for the paycheck of the eternal rewards. He was looking toward that heavenly city.

Hebrews 11:23 says, By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw he was a proper child. Why would they hide him for three months because they saw he was a proper child? Acts 7:20 refers to Moses as a fair child.

Exodus 1:12-19:

But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour:

And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.

And the king of Egypt [the pharaoh] spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah:

And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, they ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.

But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.

And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing and have saved the men children alive?

And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively [physically strong], and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them.

It is so obvious this is a lie, but God did not count this as a lie. It was used to preserve His God-given children. The midwives actually blamed it Pharaoh. They said, "Pharaoh, it's your fault. You turn them into workhorses out there and they deliver the kids before we get there. It's your fault, Pharaoh. You work these people and they become strong and now they are delivering these kids before we get there."

Exodus 1:20-22:

Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty.

And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.

And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

Because the midwives feared God, He made them houses, or literally, a posterity. He blessed their children and their grandchildren. Because Pharaoh couldn't get the midwives to kill the newborn sons, he made a decree to all the Egyptians, "Every son that is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save." You can see why the Israelites would be afraid to walk down the street, especially with a little boy in tow. Someone could just yank the little boy out of their hand and throw him in the river. Fear —immense fear — came upon all of them.

Exodus 2:1:

And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.

Exodus 6:20 tells us Moses' parents names were Amram and Jochebed.

Exodus 2:2:

And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.

Two references say the reason she hid him was because they saw something in him. Hebrews said he was proper. Acts said he was fair. This verse of scripture says he's goodly. The Hebrew word here means beautiful. If he was ugly, would they have killed him? What if the wife looked at him and said, "Amram, that's the ugliest kid I've ever seen."

"You're right, Jochebed. Let's take him out in the street and maybe some Egyptian will pick him up and throw him in the river."

Would you do that with your own child? I know everyone of you think your kids were the most beautiful things you had ever seen when they were born while everybody else stood around and said, "Looks like a kid to me." Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. Everyone thinks their kids are great, but the Bible says Moses was beautiful. If the Bible says he's beautiful, he must have been beautiful, but is it because he was a good looking child that they didn't want him killed? You don't look at your children and say, "Well, one is better looking than the other one. One can live and one can't." You don't do that! There's love in your heart. Any mother and father will tell you that when a child is born you don't care how it looks, you have a love for that child. You would preserve him whether he was ugly or good-looking. What was it they saw in this child that caused them to want to save this child?

Hebrews 11:23:

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

The first clue is the word saw. It doesn't mean to see with the eyes. Saw is the Greek word blepo, which means to see with the eyes. This saw is the Greek word horao; it is where we get the English word horizon, which means to see the whole picture. When you see the horizon, you see the whole picture. What was it that they perceived? This verse could be better translated, *because when he was born they perceived something*. Something in their spirit showed them something about Moses that they had never seen with any other child.

It says they saw that he was a proper child. The Greek word for proper is asteios. The root of that word is astu, which is the Greek word for city. They saw a child of a city in that boy. They saw a child destined for more than this earth. They saw a child headed toward the New Jerusalem — the city planned by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They saw a city child in that boy and because of that they hid him three months. Because of the promise of God, they knew their child had a destiny.

I believe that when your children are born you can know things about your children. It was the same way for Moses' parents. They horao, or saw the plan of God in that child. They saw that their child had a plan from God for the City of God and they knew he was destined to do great things.

The end of verse 23 says, *They were not afraid of the king's commandments*. When you get a vision of heaven, fear will leave. When you begin to understand what heaven is and that you're going to live there and God has that eternal city planned for you, let the news media say whatever they want. Let the newspapers say what they want. Let the government say what they want. Let the world leaders say what they want. Fear will go. They didn't fear the Pharaoh's command.

What if the President of the United States suddenly made a decree that every male child born to a Christian must be killed in an effort to stop Christians in this generation? What an opportunity for fear to run rampant through the body of Christ! However, when Amram and Jochebed looked at Moses, they saw heaven and fear left. No wonder the Bible says the Rapture is the great hope of the Church. If you understand the Rapture, fear goes out the window. You begin to understand something.

They say, "We're all going to be destroyed by nuclear war." Fear leaves. The world doesn't understand that kind of attitude. We know Jesus is going to win. We're going to be raptured out of here. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. For me to live is Christ; to die is gain. I have a heavenly city prepared for me. I'm a child of that city. Moses doesn't have anything over on you. You're a child of that city, too. The moment you accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, you became a child of the city.

His parents must have brought him up telling him, "Son, when you were born, we saw in you a child of the city — that same city that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob talked about and the reason they wandered around in tents." When it came time to push off the reproach of Egypt, lay aside the treasures of Egypt, and count the reproach of Christ even greater, Moses did it. Why? Because he knew there was going to come a paycheck one of these days in his life that was going to be in heaven when he got there.

Hebrews 11:26:

Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

Colossians 3:2 says to set your affection on things above and not on things of this earth for you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.

There are things we have for our dispensation and things that occurred in the Old Testament for their dispensation. In the Old Testament, Dispensations of Innocence, Conscience, and Human Government came along. We have things in our dispensation today that they never even dreamed of back then. The fact that God the Father lives inside of you is something that never happened in the Old Testament. The fact that Jesus Christ lives inside of you is something that never happened in the Old Testament. The fact that the Holy Spirit has made a permanent home in you and your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit is something that never happened in the Old Testament. In fact, you have things in your lifetime that Abraham, Isaac, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the prophets knew nothing about.

The fact that each one of us is a priest before our Father is something Moses knew nothing about. It was God's desire that Moses and the Old Testament saints operated as priests, but because of the sin of Israel at the time of the golden calf, they could not become priests. God chose one tribe to be the priestly tribe and represent them before God, but God's plan was that every believer in Him should be a priest and that occurred when Jesus Christ came. Jesus Christ undid the sin of all those people back there and now we can come before our God as a priest unto Him. Aren't you glad God lives in you? Aren't you glad Jesus lives in you? Aren't you glad the Holy Spirit lives in you?

There are times it is important to have friends you can rely on. However, friends can forsake you. Friends can leave you, but the Bible says you have a friend that sticks closer than a brother. How close is Jesus? He's in you. How close is God the Father? He's in you. How close is the Holy Spirit? He's in you. We have them living inside of us.

We have greater things now than they had back there, but there's going to come a time when we will all live together. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, Moses, Rahab, Joshua, and all of the other Old Testament saints are going to live with us in heaven. There is one thing we have in common with Abraham—the city. There is one thing we have in common with Moses—the city. There is something we have in common with all of those on the Old Testament: we're going to the same city. That's why when you get through all of Hebrews 11—by faith Abel, by faith Enoch, by faith Noah, by faith Moses, by faith Abraham, by faith Sarah—you come down to the time of the prophets of David and Samuel and finally Hebrews 12:1 says, *Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.*

There is coming a day when we are going to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God. Heaven will be that time when everything will be pulled together.

Ephesians 1:10:

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.

Notice that dispensation is singular and times is plural. There is going to come one dispensation when God is going to wrap all times together. Along with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you and I are going to be living in the New Jerusalem. All those throughout all the times will be in heaven together. There may be things we had different on this earth, but your mansion in heaven might be right next to Moses. Your mansion might be right next to Moses' parents and you can go over there and say, "Describe what you saw in Moses when he was born." And they begin to describe the vision they got of the heavenly Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem, and how they saw in him a child that belonged to that city. I don't know what they saw about him. It's just a child of the city. They might have seen the plan of God. They might have seen the mansion God was preparing for Moses, and they said, "So what if Egypt gives him everything they have. It's nothing compared to one brick in the house he's got up there in that place."

If you're to get your affections, your mind, on things above, then we have to know what is above. We need to know about the streets of gold and the buildings of gold. We need to know about the river of life and the tree of life. Did you know the houses are made out of the same thing the streets are? Not only is the street made out of gold, your house is made out of gold. Can you imagine that? How would you like to have a gold house? All of that is up there waiting for you. In fact, it took a chapter and a half and even then, John could not do it justice to describe what that

city is going to be like. That city is going to be lit up without the sun, the moon, or the stars. It will all be done away with at that time because the heavens will be destroyed around us. The earth will be destroyed. A whole new system will come in and heaven itself will rest over earth at that time. The plan of God will come into full accomplishment as it says here, the dispensation of the fullness of times.

2 Peter 3:3:

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.

This is the day we are living in. What are they scoffing at? The Holy Ghost? Jesus? The Church? No, they are scoffing about the coming of Jesus. My friend, God is very, very protective over the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and our home in heaven. God wants us to be heavenly-minded. Understand where He is calling us to.

2 Peter 3:6-7:

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

There is a fire of judgment that is going to hit the earth

2 Peter 3:13:

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Where is our attention supposed to be focused? We look for the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. We are to look for those things. We can say it today, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." I don't care what's going on around us, Jesus is coming back soon! Are you looking forward to the return of Jesus? Hallelujah!

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