

Faith's Future Focus (13 – 16)

God fulfills his promises, yet the patriarchs died without seeing the promises fulfilled. They had children, but not as many as the stars of the heavens. They entered the land, but they didn't possess it. They lived in it as "strangers and exiles." The patriarchs had "the long view" and so must we.

- They saw the promises with the eyes of faith: "having seen them" (v. 13)
- They understood that the fulfillment of the promise was "afar off" (v. 13)
- They were content to be exiles in an earthly country because of the promise of permanence in the heavenly city:
 - "they seek a country" v. 14
 - "they desire a better country, that is an heavenly" v. 16
 - "God has prepared for them a city" v. 16
- Their faith in the promise of a better and permanent (heavenly) country steeled their resolve to not be content with temporary earthly displacement, sojourn, and testing.

The evidence of the resolve which their faith induced in them is in the fact that, even in the face of displacement, sojourn, and testing, they had no desire to return to the country they came out of – even though they could have (v. 15):

- They were not "mindful of that country from whence they came out" (v. 15)
- Faith does not look back – it looks forward.
- Faith "seeks those things which are above" and "sets its affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2)

The patriarchs did not turn back. Many of the Hebrew Christians to whom this letter is addressed, however, were tempted to go back to Judaism to enjoy the comfort and security of this world.

The author holds up the patriarchs as an example of those who persevered in the face of temptations to turn back because, by faith, they saw something better and lasting: the heavenly Jerusalem

The patriarchs didn't long for any earthly land or city – they were "exiles and sojourners" in Canaan. They were seeking a different homeland. Their inheritance was heavenly and future.

The better homeland is the city God has prepared for his people. God is the builder of this city (11:10), and it is a heavenly city (11:16; 12:22). The earthly city of Jerusalem is and was a source of pride and devotion for the Jewish people. The writer to the Hebrews wants the Jewish people to see that everything the Old Testament says about the earthly Jerusalem is fulfilled in the heavenly Jerusalem:

- Prayers and Promises regarding the future of Jerusalem: Psalm 51:18; 122:6; 128:5; 137:5-6; 147:2; Isaiah 30:19; 33:20; 52:1,9; Daniel 9:25; Joel 3:1,20; Zephaniah 3:16-17; Zechariah 1:14; 2:2,4,12; 8:4,15; 9:9; 12:2-3,6,8-10
- Jerusalem will be the center of the universe: Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2; Jeremiah 3:17; Zechariah 8:22; 14:16-17

- Jerusalem will be holy, forgiven, comforted, safe, and joyful: Isaiah 4:3-4; Joel 3:17; Zechariah 8:3; 13:10; Isaiah 66:13; Jeremiah 33:15; Zechariah 14:11-12; Isaiah 65:18

Since the heavenly Jerusalem is residence of God, the patriarchs longed for that city because **they longed for God more than they desired any of the things of this world**. Dwelling in God's presence is their greatest desire.

And because of this desire, "God is not ashamed to be called their God" (v. 16) and because he is not ashamed of his people, "God has prepared for them a city."

God desires to dwell with his people: Exodus 29:45; Jeremiah 32:38; Ezekiel 11:20; 37:27; Hebrews 8:10; Ezekiel 43:9; Zechariah 2:10-11; 8:3; Revelation 21:3