

## “Aliens and Strangers” *Living in the Future - Hebrews 11*

### Hebrews 11:1-16 & Background of Hebrews:

“On the whole, the most plausible backdrop for the epistle to the Hebrews might be a Christian church, largely Jewish in membership, in a city such as Cyrene. Under repeated pressures from their unbelieving fellow Jews they were **tempted to give up their Christian profession and to return to their ancestral faith**. If the form of this faith that allured them particularly was a sectarianism similar to that known at Qumran, then many of the author’s appeals would have been especially pertinent... **The temptation to withdraw** from civilized life into a kind of wilderness experience is precisely the kind of temptation the Epistle to the Hebrews would counter so well.” → Walvoord & Zuck

### Hebrews 11:1 -> Faith defined

- **Faith is:**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ of things hoped for → ὑπόστασις (hupostasis) → substance, that which has a firm foundation, that which is the basis of something, title-deed.
    - Used in Heb 1:3 → of Jesus being the exact representation (very substance) of God.
    - Used in Heb 3:14 → of the Hebrew believer’s first confidence (built on firm foundation) in Christ.
    - **The \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ to things hoped for** → “FAITH is the substance of things hoped for (Heb. 11:1). The Greek word translated ‘substance’ had a technical meaning in the business world of the first century. It referred to one’s property or effects. It was used in such expressions as ‘Out of this *estate* I declare that my husband owes me,’ or, ‘more land than I actually *possess*,’... It was also used to refer to ‘the whole body of **documents bearing on the ownership of a person’s property**, deposited in the archives, and forming the evidence of ownership.’” → Kenneth Wuest
    - A wide semantic range → “Moulton and Milligan in their ‘Vocabulary of the Greek Testament’, say of these uses, ‘These varied uses (*of hupostasis*) are at first sight somewhat perplexing, but in all the cases there is the same central idea of **something that underlies visible conditions and guarantees a future possession.**’ Thus, they translate ‘**Faith is the title-deed of things hoped for.**’” → Kenneth Wuest
  - \_\_\_\_\_ of things not seen → ἔλεγχος (elegchos) → a proof, an evidence, or a test by which something is proved.
    - “That by which invisible things are proved and we are convinced of their reality” → Thayer’s Greek Lexicon
- **Key Idea** => Faith is the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ concerning God’s promises that we have confident expectation of but cannot yet see. This is the sense in which Abraham believed God and acted upon that belief.

### Hebrews 11:8-12 -> Abraham’s Journey → Faith Waiting → In not of the world

- \_\_\_\_\_ to go out and \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 8)
- To a place he **was to receive** as an \_\_\_\_\_ (v. 8)
  - “Was to receive” → μέλλω λαμβάνειν (mello lambanein) → I am about to.
  - The verb tense indicates a continuous action in the past ex. I was about to.
  - The author’s point is that in the same way we as believers live in a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ set of promises.
- He **went out** not knowing (v. 8)
  - He didn’t know **where** he was going.
  - He didn’t know **who** he would encounter there.
  - He didn’t know **what** would happen to him in the intervening time.
- Living in tents (v. 9)
  - Abraham again shows trust that he would indeed receive what was promised. Rather than saying put in what he knew he embraced what was \_\_\_\_\_. The author is comparing the promise of something solid (city) with the experience of something passing (tent).
- Seeking \_\_\_\_\_ built by God and by faith receiving descendants (v. 10-12)
  - Abraham and Sarah considered him faithful who had promised. This included all of the promises made them.
  - **Implication** => It didn’t matter that it shouldn’t be possible for them to conceive and receive the fullness of what was promised. Everything depends on the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the one who promised.

**Hebrews 11:13-16** -> Abraham and Sarah never received the full \_\_\_\_\_ in that they never received the land they were promised. It was the act of their seeking that showed they were living in light of a promised future. The author of Hebrews says they were seeking a \_\_\_\_\_.

"These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were **strangers** and **exiles** on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are **seeking a homeland**. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return, but as it is, they desire a **better country** that is a **heavenly** one"

- **Stranger** -> ξένοι (Xenoi) -> Adj meaning stranger or foreigner. The idea is that they belong somewhere else certainly not here.
- **Alien** -> παρεπίδημοί (Parepidemoi) -> Adj meaning transient(s) -> Someone who is passing through (Pilgrims or Exiles). The idea of the pilgrim is particularly helpful here. Pilgrims are not residents they by their very nature are just passing through.

Walvoord & Zuck → "That the readers should look forward to '**the world to come**' and treat their present experience as a \_\_\_\_\_ is a lesson enforced by the life of Abraham. This great patriarch **lived like a stranger in a land he would later receive as his inheritance**. So also would the readers inherit if they like this forefather, kept looking forward to the city with foundations, a reference to the heavenly and eternal Jerusalem"

- **Gal 4:26** → "But Jerusalem above is free and she is our mother"
- **Rev 21:10** → "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God"
- **Heb 12:22** → "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the innumerable angels in festal gathering"
- **Heb 13:12** → "So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go out to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come"

**Main Point** => The central idea here is that the recipients of the epistle of Hebrews were tempted to check out. They were under pressure and contemplating a return to Judaism and an escape from the world via monastic living. The author's point is that they have something better built on better promises and they should emulate the faith of those who went before seeking the heavenly city (Abraham) who watched and waited for what was promised and as a result received the commendation (Hebrews 11:2).

### Relationship to Us as Believers

- **Living as aliens and strangers is:**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ focused
  - \_\_\_\_\_ with appearances
  - \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ in a lost world (confidence from our future shown in now)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ of suffering (if they hated me they will hate you. The fellowship of his sufferings)
- **Living as aliens and strangers is NOT:**
  - \_\_\_\_\_ upon our ability (It depends solely on Christ and his promises)
  - Taking over the \_\_\_\_\_ for Christ
  - \_\_\_\_\_ living
  - A \_\_\_\_\_ of life without suffering

**Conclusion** → Warren Wiersbe → "Waiting is for me one of the most difficult disciplines of life. Yet true faith is able to wait for the fulfillment of God's purposes in God's time. But while we are waiting we must also be obeying. 'By Faith Abraham... obeyed (Heb 11:8)' He obeyed when he did not know where he was going. He lived in tents because he was a stranger and pilgrim in the world and had to be ready to move whenever God spoke. Christians today are also strangers and pilgrims. Abraham had his eyes on the heavenly city and lived '**in the future tense**'."