

SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

"TRUSTING GOD WITH TRUST"

HEBREWS 11:13-16

This Week's Core Competency

Hope – I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 6:19, 20, *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.*

Abraham's hope and that of his sons was based on a promise God made to him in Genesis 12:1-4; later that promise was formalized in an unconditional covenant in Genesis 15:1-21. In a nutshell, God promised Abram three things: descendants, blessings, and land. God told him, "I will make you into a great nation" (v. 2), an incredible promise in that Sarai was barren (11:30) and both of them were too old to even think of starting a family. He promised to bless him, to make him a blessing, to bless those who blessed him, and ultimately to bless all peoples on earth through him (vv. 3, 4), an incredible promise in that it was an announcement of the gospel in advance (Gal 3:8). And then, after Abram arrived in Canaan, the LORD appeared to him and said, "To your offspring I will give this land" (v. 7), an incredible promise in that the Canaanites, who knew nothing of the promise, lived there. Later, when Abram asked, "O Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it," God made a

The description of the new Jerusalem as 'heavenly' must not be hastily understood as nonearthly.

–Robert L. Saucy

covenant with him and assured him "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates" (15:18). We know that executing the terms of the covenant did not depend on anything Abram agreed to do because he was sound asleep when it was ratified (v. 12). God alone obligated himself to keep the agreement he made with Abram—no matter what.

The writer of the book of Hebrews makes much of the fact that Abraham believed God's promise and obeyed God's command to leave Mesopotamia "even though he did not know where he was going" (Heb 11:8). Abraham's faith was exciting. He left his homeland for a foreign land as eagerly as one might leave a foreign land for his homeland. Moreover, even though Abraham lived in the land God had promised him, it never belonged to him; it was never his. All he owned when he died was the cave of Machpelah in a field that he bought from Ephron the Hittite where he buried Sarah. Paradoxically, Abraham lived in the land, not as its owner, but as a resident alien. Neither he nor his sons after him ever received what God promised, "not even a foot of ground" (Ac 7:5). The author of Hebrews simply says, "He lived like a stranger in a foreign land" (v. 9). In fact, all of the patriarchs lived the unsettled lives of nomads, continuously moving their tents from place to place, having no permanent dwellings. The whole land had been promised to Abraham, and yet, neither he nor they ever had a place to call home.

Given this context, the writer of Hebrews tells us that Abraham "was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (v. 10). Put differently, he was looking forward to

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God building a permanent place for him and his descendants, presumably in Canaan, the land promised him for an inheritance. And Abraham wasn't the only one; all the patriarchs looked forward to living in the promised land as citizens rather than resident aliens (v. 9). They looked forward to their destiny, becoming a nation just as God promised (Ge 12:2). Clearly they were not thinking of returning to Mesopotamia. Had that been the case, they could have easily done so. Moreover, why would they all have asked to be buried in Canaan? The "better country" they longed for was "heavenly" (v. 16) not because it was heaven. It was "heavenly" because it was promised by God. The city they longed for was not "heavenly" not because it was in heaven. It was "heavenly" because it was designed and built by God. The patriarchs believed God would give them the land he promised, make them into a great nation, and provide them with a permanent city in which to live in that land. Remarkably, all of them "were still living by faith when they died" (v. 13). In other words, they all remained confident of what God had promised right up to the day they died.

Since God's promise of a land and a city remain unfulfilled, we look forward to their fulfillment in the future when Christ rules on earth and then in the final eternal state. In the words of one commentator, "To describe Jerusalem and the country as heavenly is simply to speak of them in their final eternal state, which is the result of God's salvation. The hope of the patriarchs and the prophets for a restored earthly Jerusalem ultimately merged into a Jerusalem of eternal, heavenly quality created anew by the final salvation of God. The final goal of such a 'heavenly' land, however, does not negate the prophecies of a historical restoration of the nation of Israel to the land before the final regenerative action" (Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 55; see entire treatment of the land promise in Hebrews on pages 50-57).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Hebrews 11:13-16

Cf., another translation

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. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. 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. 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. (NIV(c)1984)

13 All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. 14 Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. 15 If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. 16 But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. (NLT)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "these people" in v. 13.
- * Underline "still living by faith" in v. 13.
- * Bracket "the things promised" in v. 13.
- * Circle "saw" in v. 13.
- * Circle "welcomed" in v. 13.
- * Circle "admitted" in v. 13.
- * Bracket "such things" in v. 14.
- * Highlight "country," "homeland," and "city" in vv. 14-16.
- * Box "instead" indicating *contrast* in v. 16.
- * Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 16.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Who are "all these people" the writer mentions in verse 13?
2. In what sense were they "living by faith" when they died?
3. Identify "the things" God "promised" Abraham that the patriarchs did not receive before they died.
4. Put what the author means by "they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance" in your own words.
5. "Such things" means what things in verse 14?
6. The patriarchs were looking for a land of their own. What land was that? (see v. 8-10)
7. They couldn't have had the land of Ur (Ge 11:31) in mind. Why not?
8. They were looking for a "better land." A better land than what land, and what made it better?
9. Explain why God is not ashamed to be called their God.
10. **Discussion:** Talk about whether the city and the land God prepared for Abraham and his descendants will ever be theirs.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The writer of the book of Hebrews wants to commend living by faith to his readers ancient and modern. He wants to do this because his ancient readers were tempted to do the exact opposite, to stop living by faith, as his modern readers are as well. They were tempted to give in to the temptation to return to living like Jews rather than living like Christians, in order to escape the persecution they were suffering. *The NIV Study Bible* describes their situation this way. "The readers are told that there can be no turning back to or continuation in the old Jewish system, which has been superseded by the unique priesthood of Christ. God's people now must look only to him, whose atoning death, resurrection and ascension have opened the way into the true, heavenly sanctuary of God's presence. Resisting temptations to give up the struggle, believers must persevere in the spiritual contest to which they have committed themselves. Otherwise they may meet with judgment as did the rebellious generation of Israelites in the desert" (1858). While they didn't run the risk of losing their salvation, they did run the risk of spiritual stagnation, not to mention the consequences of disobedience that typically accompany it.

To accomplish his purpose, the writer appeals to the example of the patriarchs. According to verse 13, each of them believed until the day he died that God would deliver on the promise he made to Abraham, which is found in Genesis 12:1-4 and later confirmed in a covenant in 15:7-19. Among "the things promised" alluded to in this verse was the promise of the land. When he ratified the covenant, God assured Abraham, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates" (v. 18). The land promise more than any other is the subject of verses 13-16. According to the writer,

by faith the patriarchs looked over the horizon to its fulfillment and readily confessed in the meantime they were "sojourning strangers" on earth. Commenting on people who talk like that, he infers in verse 14 that the patriarchs were looking forward to receiving the land God had promised them. They clearly didn't have Ur, their past homeland, in mind according to verse 15; otherwise, they would have simply folded their tents and returned to Mesopotamia. No, they were looking forward to God giving them a better land, a land that might be called "heavenly" not because it was in heaven but because it was God-given. The patriarchs were not looking forward to going to heaven when they died; they were looking forward to receiving as their inheritance the land God had promised (vv. 8, 9). Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; that is, because the patriarchs "were still living by faith when they died," God is not ashamed to be called their God—a fact that he has demonstrated by preparing a city for them.

The promise of a land and a city are so closely related that it's reasonable to believe that promises related to both will be fulfilled at the same time. And since we expect the land promise to be fulfilled when all Israel is saved in the future (Ro 11:25-32) in connection with Christ's return and earthly rule, we expect the city promise to be fulfilled then as well. But even though Christ will rule over redeemed Israel and redeemed Gentile nations for 1000 years (Rev 20:4) from the city of Jerusalem, his capital, that will not mark the end. After the millennial reign ends, Christ will turn the kingdom over to the Father for eternity. Then God will dwell forever with his people in the new Jerusalem described in all its eternal glory in Revelation 21-22, and the story of redemption that began on earth will finally end on earth.

The Message of the Passage

Continue living by faith even if you don't live to see the fulfillment of all the things God promised.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“Trusting God with Trust”

(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 13 **these people** Either all those the writer had mentioned in verses 4-12 or, more likely, just the patriarchs mentioned in verses 8-12, since Enoch didn't die and the verses contain a travel motif. "The reference must be to those who engaged in pilgrimage in response to the divine mandate, namely, Abraham and Sarah, and with them Isaac and Jacob (vv 8-9, 11); so Westcott, 394; Moffatt, 173; Spicq, 2:350; Michel, 397). Although they were promised 'a place' they were to receive as an inheritance (v 8), they remained resident aliens in 'the promised land' throughout their lives (v 9)" (William L. Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 47b, *Hebrews 9-13*, 356).
- v. 13 **living by faith** Lit., "according to faith all these died" or "all these persons died in accordance with the principle of faith" (356); cf., "all of these died in faith" (NRSV); "these all died in faith" (NKJV). "They lived out their lives and died still exercising faith, without having possessed what was promised" (Leon Morris, "Hebrews," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12:120). "The possession of the land, the multitude of descendants (including those who would be kings), and the blessing of the nations all would be fulfilled in a time after Abraham and his immediate family passed from the scene" (George H. Guthrie, *The NIV Application Commentary: Hebrews*, 378).
- v. 13 **things promised** Lit., "the promises" (NASB). Clearly the reference is to what God promised and not the promises themselves.
- v. 13 **aliens and strangers** "The combination 'aliens and strangers' reminds us of Abraham's description of himself as 'an alien and a stranger' (Gen 23:4) and Jacob's words to pharaoh (Gen 47:9). The psalmist could also describe himself as 'an alien, a stranger,' and add, 'as all my fathers were' (Ps 39:12). It is true that Isaac once sowed 'crops' (Gen 26:12) and Jacob at one time 'built a place for himself' (Gen 33:17). But neither really settled down in the land, and to the end of their lives they were pilgrims rather than residents" (Morris, 12:117). This is an example of hendiadys, the expression of an idea by two nouns joined by the conjunction 'and.' It is equivalent to 'sojourning strangers'" (Lane, 357).
- v. 13 **welcomed them** Cf., 'greeted them from afar' (ESV). "The metaphorical expression [porrothen . . . aspasameno], 'saluting from a distance,' has classical analogies (e.g., Euripides, *Ion* 585-87; Philo, *Charmenides* 153b; cf. Windisch, *TDNT* 1:497; LSJ 258), where usually it is a person, or one's homeland or native city, which is saluted from afar. Philo at one point comments on the plight of slaves who were sold into a foreign country and as a result were unable to 'dream again of saluting the soil of their native land' (*On the Special Laws* 4.17, cited by Spicq, 1:84). The presence of the term [*patris*], 'homeland,' in v 14 suggests that the writer was thinking of the metaphorical salute given by the returning traveler to his homeland when he penned the phrase in v 13b. In point of fact, however, the object of the salute is the fulfillment of the promises, which was yet deferred in time" (Lane, 356, 57).
- v. 14 **such things** I.e., that they were "aliens and strangers on earth" (v. 13b).
- v. 14 **looking for** Not looking to *find* but looking forward to *receive*. They were seeking the land God had promised Abraham as his homeland.
- vv. 14 **country** Gk. *padrida* "fatherland" (Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, 708), or "homeland" (the NET Bible; ESV; NRSV; NKJV) in v. 14. The term "country" is supplied by the NIV translators in verses 15, 16 where "land" might be better (cf., the NET Bible).
- v. 15 **"heavenly"** The term describes the origin of the land and city not their location. The land is heavenly because it's a "promised" land, and the city is heavenly because God is its architect and builder.
- v. 16 **their God** "He is spoken of again and again as 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Sometimes God uses these very words of himself (Exod 3:6, 15-16). Jesus used the same expression to show the truth that the patriarchs still live (Mark 12:26-27)" (Morris, 121).
- v. 16 **has prepared** Or simply "prepared." The verb [*hetoimasen*] is aorist indicative active [*etoimazo*]. "Proof or illustration that He is not ashamed,—that is, that He is their God. He is their God, as is seen in His having prepared a city for them—His own city. Whether the Writer means by 'prepared,' made ready merely in design as yet, or actually bestowed upon them, may be uncertain" (A. B. Davidson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 225). God is the architect and builder of the city according to v. 10. Perhaps the design of the city is complete in heaven while its construction awaits Christ's rule and the eternal state. This is confirmed by the connection of the city to the land (v. 16) implying that both are inherited at the same time. Abraham and his descendants will enter the city when they inherit the land when Christ rules on earth.

Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.
Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!

The packages have been opened. Family gatherings are ending. We have all eaten way too many Christmas goodies. But, before we say goodbye to 2012, take some time to review the year with your family. This would be a fun activity to do with several families or your home group. Make a Top Ten list for 2012. As a family decide which events ranked as the most significant during the year. Was a new baby born this year? Was someone baptized? Did your family move or change jobs? Did you take a memorable family vacation? Did your family experience loss this year? This year held surprises, things we didn't see coming. Next year will too. Good and bad will likely come our way but one thing remains sure - our hope is secure. Use this activity to have a discussion with your family about our text this week. Hebrews says that all of the previously mentioned people did not see their promises fulfilled. They were still living in faith when they went on to the heavenly city that had been prepared for them. I love the verse that says "they were longing for a better country - a heavenly one." How good it is for us to set our hope on Jesus and our future hope. Good memories are precious but our future hope outweighs them all!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Hebrews 11:13-16

1. Who is verse thirteen referring to when it says "all these people"?
2. According to the end of verse 13, what did these people consider themselves?
3. What were they longing for?

What Do You Think

1. Is it hard to still trust God when you can't see hope in a situation?
2. How did the people of faith in Hebrews 11 keep their hope?
3. What is the future hope for those who trust Jesus?

What R U Going To Do

Our text today draws our hearts and minds to heaven - our future country. We know for sure they God reigns on His throne in heaven. Have family members draw pictures of what they think His throne might look like.

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Hope- Coping with the problems of life and death with the help of Jesus

Memory Verse

Isa 9:6 "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
 Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-five years and have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.