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If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, or aren't sure and would like to become one, then you need to believe that Jesus Christ was and is the Son of God, that he was God who became a man, that he lived a sinless and perfect life, keeping the Law of God perfect in every way, that he kept faith perfectly, and that he was crucified on that cruel cross for your sins, mine and the entire world- he died for our sins! His death on the cross paid the penalty fully, one time for all sins that we have ever committed and that we will ever commit. He died; he went down into the bowels of the earth, even into Hell, and was raised from the dead on the third day in a resurrected, eternal body. He ascended back into heaven, was seated at the right hand of God, and is now Lord over heaven and earth. He is coming again to judge the world, to raise the dead, where he will give an eternal, resurrected, glorified body to everyone that has believed on him as their Lord and Savior, and to establish his kingdom one earth.

You come become a Christian right now as you read this, by personally placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior; believing that he is God's only begotten Son, that he died on the cross for you and that he was raised from the dead and is now seated in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.."* Acts 16:31a And when you do trust Christ, and Christ alone, as your Lord and Savior, then go to God the Father in heaven in prayer and tell him so. Tell him that you have believed on his Son, thank him for his Son, and thank him for forgiving your sins and saving you! *"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord", and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."* Romans 10:9,10 *"For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* Romans 10:13 *"Therefore, being justified by faith (declared righteous), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* Romans 5:1

“Just Passing Through”

A. Intro - Believers in Jesus Christ are referred to as aliens and strangers in the world, or pilgrims and sojourners, and so we are. The reality is that this present world is not our home; heaven is our home and the new heavens and earth that God is going to create will be our eternal home. But to have these concepts “sink in” to our souls, we will need to understand what each term means.

1. English

Citizen – was one who was born in the country having descended from a certain family, or clan; one who was of the same bloodline. At a certain age these individuals become citizens by right of birth. One can become a citizen by right of birth, or one can become a naturalized citizen, even though he or she is not one of the people due to them being of a different race. Becoming a citizen gave you citizenship rights in that land, but it did not make you one of the indigenous people.

Alien – the term comes from the Latin by way of Middle English and is the word for one who was born in another country, or one who belongs to another country.

Resident Alien – was someone from another country who was residing in your country on either a temporary basis, or a permanent basis, but were not citizens.

Stranger – from the French through Middle English and is the word for a newcomer to your area, an outsider from another area.

Journey – from the vulgar Latin through Old French to Middle English had the ideas of the travel of a day, or in the idea usually found in the Bible of traveling from one place to another. It was often used in business as one traveled from one place to another to conduct business.

Wandering – was used in an undesirable and nonconstructive sense of moving from one place to another without having any plans, or travel aimlessly in one's life, or for a short time. In a better sense it was used for having no permanent residence, or of one who preferred to live a nomadic existence.

Sojourn – was used for one who spent the day or the night in an area; it spoke of one just passing through. But it also referred to one who lived in the area temporarily, or even had residence in the area for a brief period of time. The length of time that one was in the area was not the issue. It could be for the night, or it could be for many years. The things that distinguished it were: one was not a citizen of that land, (not one of the people inhabiting the land), and they were not residents of that land; they were only staying there temporarily as they traveled from one place to another in their journey.

Resident – one who settled down and lived permanently in an area.

Domicile – one's permanent legal address. One could have their domicile in one country, yet reside in another country altogether, or in several other countries. Wherever they moved to would be their new residence, but they would still have domicile, their permanent legal address somewhere else.

Pilgrim – a person who journeys, a traveler; one who embarks on a quest, usually for something sacred; a founder of a new land.

2. Greek

Allotrios – an alien, one who belongs to another race, people, or country.

Idios – one's own race, or people.

Xenos – a stranger, a foreigner.

Paroikeo – to dwell among a foreign people in a foreign land, to live alongside people who are not of your race, a neighbor next to you who came from a different country.

Epidemeo – to live in a place temporarily, to have a brief period of residence in a foreign land.

Parepidemos – sojourning (traveling) in a strange place, sojourning in a foreign land away from one's own people, one who lives for a short time in a foreign land.

3. Hebrew

Ger – not a native, not a foreigner in another land, but a foreigner who lives among people who are not his blood relatives, race, or of his nation. The reasons why people do this are due to famine, military encounters, personal problems, fleeing from prosecution or persecution, or simply because they prefer to live a nomadic life. He has no rights and his protection was dependent upon the hospitality of the host nation he was living in. The noun form would be ger and would refer to the stranger, while the verb form would be gur and would refer to the sojourner.

Toshab – would refer to the sojourner in your area, one who was passing through your area as they went from one place to another; the length of time they stayed there was not the issue.

B. The Example Of Abraham -

“I am a stranger, (ger), and a sojourner, (toshab), with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.” Genesis 23:4

Here we see the two words ger and toshab being connected together, גֵּר-וְתוֹשָׁב , as one word to say that he was a foreigner from another place and another race living in their midst on a temporary basis. But also that he was just passing through, this was not a permanent home for him.

One can look at someone like, say Abraham, and wonder what makes the difference between being a permanent resident and a sojourner? The difference lies in the attitude of the individual. Being from a different country and of a different race are indeed factors in this matter, but the difference is what is **the individual's attitude and intentions regarding their living in the land.**

A good case in point is Abraham and his nephew Lot. Both of the same race, both from the same foreign land, both of the same family lineage, both foreigners living in a faraway land. The difference is that Lot settled down where he was living and became one of the people there. He bought a home, got involved in the politics of the land, was involved in commercial activities, etc.. This was his new home. While Abraham lived in a tent and regarded the whole matter as being a temporary situation.

Abraham was a descendant of Shem, Genesis 11:10, “*These are the generations of Shem: Shem was an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad two years after the flood:*”, through Eber, sometimes known as Heber, “*And Eber lived four and thirty years, and begat Pele:*” Genesis 11:16. and through his father Terah, “*And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Lahore, and Haran.*”, Genesis 11:26.

These were the original Hebrews and many of their numbers lived all over the various areas of the Middle East in those days. They were known by the Sumerians as the Habiru, to others as the Habitué, or Fibrin and apparently to the Egyptians as the Tapir. They were viewed socially as wandering Arameans, or just wanderers, with apparently no centralized domicile to call their own. They also had no fixed place in the social order of the places that they chose to live in and were basically viewed as foreigners and not as a large social group of that country. They were known to support themselves through various types of labor entered into through contract.

In Genesis 11:28 we see that Abram's brother, Haran, died in Ur of the Chaldees, “*And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees.*” It could very well be that the entire family had been working and living in the area for some time when Haran passed away. But after he died, the whole family went back up to what could have been the ancestral area they lived in, Haran. “*And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sharai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.*” Genesis 11:31

I referred to Haran as the family's ancestral area, it more than likely could have been Terah's ancestral home. The fact that the names of the son and the city were both Haran could be coincidental, but then Terah could have named his son after the city. One thing that is not coincidental is that **the two chief cities for the worship of the moon god, Sin, were Ur in the south and Haran in the north!** And it is no coincidence that Terah took his family there, when instead Abram needed to be following the call of the one true God for his life. Either way, the family left Ur and went to live in Haran.

The call of God for Abram took place back in Ur of the Chaldees, “*And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.*” Genesis 15:7 But Abram didn't leave Haran to go into the land until after his father, Terah, passed away. “*And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.*” Genesis 11:32

The point is that Abraham was already an alien, sojourner and journeyman in its original sense of traveling around to make a living, before God called him, saved him and led him on his journey into the promised land. And when he got saved, then he became a spiritual sojourner in this life. Abram was an alien and sojourner when he was living in Ur; he was an alien and sojourner all the time he lived in the land of Canaan, and when he was living in Egypt.

During his travels he saw a lot of things and lived in many areas, sometimes in the countryside and sometimes in the city. The one experience he never had, though, was settling down in one place that he could call home, that is, a place where he felt was home. He had also seen quite a few cities that men had built in his travels. There was, of course, Ur, then many other city-states along the way, then the city of Yeru-Shalem where Melchizedek was the king, and even the big cities of Egypt. Yet he was not impressed with any of them, something was lacking. They were not what his soul was looking for. And he felt the same way as he traveled from country to country, something was lacking in them also. They were not what his soul was longing for.

C. Looking For A City -

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles, (tents), with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Hebrews 11:9,10

Abraham had lived in Ur, Haran, and in his travels had seen several large cities on earth, but he was not impressed with any of them. He was looking for something different, something eternal, and something that God had made. He had seen the cities of the world, which were all built around commerce and the worship of certain deities, but he was looking for the city belonging to the one true God!

And when he finally came down into the land that God gave him an interesting thing happened. He still felt like this wasn't it for him. When so many of our pioneers came across the country and finally arrived in Oregon, Washington, or California, they were excited. They cleared the land, settled down, built houses for themselves and went about making a life for themselves. They had finally arrived! This is what they had gone through so much to have. This was their new home!

But when Abraham finally stepped foot on the land God gave him he never felt like this was home. So much so, he never settled down in one place to have that sense of permanence, to settle down, build a house and have that sense of home. In fact it was just the opposite! He lived on the land that God gave him, but he lived on it in nomadic fashion.

And it wasn't because of some psychological reason due to him being an alien in a foreign land, which he actually was, Abraham believed and knew that God gave all that land to him. He knew that it was his land, yet in his heart, **it wasn't what he was looking for**. He lived on it; he enjoyed it; he was thankful for it; in fact, he lived all over it as he traveled around! Why, then, did Abraham live on his own land as an alien and a stranger?

The answer goes back to Abraham and Sarah being on a long list of people, we ourselves included, to whom God has promised our own land and city that is not of this world. A city that he has built for all of us and our very own country that he rules over. A city that is permanent and will be our eternal home. And Abraham was one of those believers that was not going to settle for anything that this earth has to offer! And for him, settling down and building a man made house would have been just that, settling for what the world has to offer. His faith motivated him differently.

An interesting point to think about, perhaps Abraham never had that sense of “home” in him, as so many others have experienced, especially if what we know about the Habiru people to be true. There has been much written about the Habiru people, not all of it flattering, for they were also described as a traveling people who lived on the fringes of society without secure ties to settled communities.

It could very well be that Abraham's experience growing up as a child was one of traveling around with his parents from place to place, so he never had the sense of “home” in his soul. He was an alien and a sojourner everywhere he lived as a child and an adult, and when they would come into some new area to live and work he would still have that same sense. So when God brought him into the promised land, he basically lived as he had lived all his life, as an alien and a sojourner. Except this time he actually had something to look forward to and that was the city of God! To him one area was just about as good as the next one to “hang his hat”, and there was no place on earth that felt like “home” to him, and besides, God had promised him an eternal home!

An interesting thing took place after Sarah had died. Abraham needed a place to bury his wife, so he approached the sons of Heth asking if he could purchase a plot of land from them to inter Sarah's remains. *“And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there.”* Genesis 23:13

What's interesting is that he had to buy the land! Now God had given him the land and he had moved there and was living on it, but we forget that the land had been inhabited by a different people for years. So what was his status? His status was, as he said, that he was an alien living on the land as a sojourner; a sojourner in his own land. If he didn't own property, that meant he either was in the status of a renter, or one who “free ranged” following his sheep and cattle around as they grazed.

Abraham had become very rich in silver, cattle and gold, but I can't find one place where it is recorded that Abraham owned any property, no house, no property, not even a piece of ground to bury his wife. He indeed was a sojourner. All the people around him lived in homes, villages and towns, but Abraham and Sarah lived in a tent traveling around from place to place. It was enough for Abraham to know that all the land belonged to him, besides in his heart he was looking for something else, something more permanent and wonderful. God had given him the title to the land, even though other people were living on it at the time.

The word used for **looking** is *ekdechomai*. It can be translated as looking, but it has the idea of looking forward for something to happen, or waiting for something to happen, but with the idea of eagerness of mind. It would be like the family who has worked hard all year long to go on vacation to some place, or to church camp, so they are eagerly looking forward to it.

It is found in the imperfect tense, which describes a continuous action in the past that had a beginning and an ending. It tells us that the beginning of this action of waiting, or looking forward to the city of God, began when God told him what he had in store for Abram in the future. The continuous action would look at all the many years of his life after he heard about what God for him and Sarah and their children. And the ending of the continuous action would look at when Abram died.

The middle voice tells us that Abram was personally benefited in his spiritual life by the exercising of his faith concerning the promise that God had made to him about the eternal city. He could have settled down, like so many people, and gone after money, security, property, housing, furniture, things, or the glory of this world. But instead, he lived the life of faith; he really lived the life of faith! And his faith even impacted his lifestyle. Many Christians mouth the words of faith, but live lives like the people of the world around them. This Abram did not do.

And it's interesting that Abram was looking toward the city with foundations. What's interesting that his mind focused on that aspect of it. Why would foundations be so important to him? Well he had lived in a tent most, if not all, of his life, and foundations spoke of something permanent. And the permanence of the buildings he had seen with their foundations was not the type of permanence he was looking for. He wanted something that was eternal!

Abraham was waiting for the city whose builder and maker was God; a city designed by God, built by God, and built by God for the sake of all the righteous people from this planet, who have believed on Jesus Christ as their Savior, to live in eternally! He wasn't interested in a city built by some ruler in honor of himself.

D. They Confessed They Were Pilgrims -

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Hebrews 11:13

There are several things in view in this verse that define their lives here on earth. They all died in faith; they had not received the promises; they did see them from afar off; they were persuaded of them; they had embraced them by faith; and they had confessed that they were aliens and sojourners on this earth.

There are six verbs in this verse. The first one is to *die* and is found in the orist tense. The next five verbs are all found in the orist participle. Now the orist participle denotes action that precedes the main verb, which is to die. So what it is saying is that before Abraham and the others died none of them had received the things promised to them by God concerning eternal matters, but they did see them from afar off by faith, that they were persuaded of them, that they welcomed them and that they confessed that they were aliens and sojourners on this earth.

The first one we want to look at is that these all *died in faith, kata pistin*. *Kata*, when used with the accusative case, denotes that something is in accordance with something else, or that it conforms to it. It's saying that faith is the standard and that their deaths were in conformity to the standard of faith and that's because they were living by faith when they died.

The second verb tells us that *they had not received* the things promised to them by God. The word is *komizo* and it meant to carry off for oneself that which belongs to you, either due to wages, which is not the case here, or as a gift. *Promises* is in the plural so it's more than one promise, but it really gets into all the promises that Jesus Christ made to them, (and us), concerning eternity. Such things as the eternal city, resurrection body, etc.. They had received many temporal promises of blessings here on earth, but there were many more things God had promised to them in eternity and these were the promises that they had not yet received.

The third verb is that they had *seen them from a distance*, or from afar off and the word used there is *horaō*. *Horaō* was to fix one's gaze at something far off in the distance; something that one could see a way out on the horizon. Used here with *parrothen* to denote a great distance away. Abraham, (et al), could see the New Jerusalem with his eyes of faith way, way off in the distance.

The fourth verb was that they had been persuaded of them, peitho. *Peitho* meant to convince someone to believe by the force of argument, (in a good sense), or by evidence. And it all goes back to the character and nature of the Lord in his dealings with him. They saw that he was righteous, that he was powerful, that he loved them, that he always kept his Word and that he always wanted to bless them. So when he told them of his plans for them in eternity, which he also promised to them, they were persuaded and believed him!

The fifth verb was that they welcomed them, or embraced them as we have here. The word used is *aspozomai* and it had the idea of welcoming and embracing a good friend, or seeing an old friend that you hadn't seen in a long time. If they were off in the distance you would wave heartily at them. It had the idea that your heart was attached to this person, that you hadn't seen in so long, and when you did finally see them you would wave heartily. And so it is with the eternal city God has for all of us, it is far off in the distance, **but that is where our heart is!**

The sixth verb is that they had confessed that they were aliens and sojourners on earth. *Homologeō*, translated here as confessed, other translations as admit, could be used for the private confession of sins to God, or in a formal court room setting, or in a public declaration of something outside the home. It would be used of stating something openly outside the home so everyone knew where you stood.

Now what we have here is that these believers openly confessed to people outside the home that they were not only believers in Jesus Christ, but also that they were looking forward to the resurrection from the dead and living with God for all eternity in his heavenly city, the New Jerusalem! Now how do we know that these OT believers openly confessed their faith in Christ and the fact that they were Pilgrims “*just passing through*” this life on their way to the city of God?

It is found in the next verse where it says that they were saying these things. Hebrews 11:14, “*For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.*”, tells us why all these OT believers, and we NT believers as well, are aliens and sojourners on the earth, because we also are seeking a country, our own country, and it is not on this earth. *Saying* is in the present participle, which shows that it was their way of life, that they continuously were confessing these things to others.

This concept of Abraham confessing to others his faith in Jesus Christ, the promises concerning the resurrection from the dead and living with God forever in his city from the heavens, was something that Abraham practiced from the time he was first saved until he passed away. And Abraham wasn't the only one doing it, so were all the other OT believers as well.

By the way, we also could bring in the servants and slaves that were a part of Abraham's household to show that many, if not all of his people, had responded to his testimony by believing in Jesus Christ themselves. How do we know that? Because they were all circumcised! “*And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.*” Genesis 17:23 Including Isaac and Ishmael!

This is how these believers mentioned in chapter eleven lived their lives. They lived them by faith before they died and they died in conformity to that faith. Their *confession* was that they were “*just passing through*”! They confessed that they were aliens and sojourners on the earth, on their way to the city of God. And we note in the Greek it's *epi tes ges*, upon the earth! Not in just some country foreign to them, but that **they were aliens and sojourners no matter where they lived on earth!**

The word for *country* here is *patrida* and means the fatherland. It is a country that comes from, was founded by and created by the Father. It is a real country, it has a city, the New Jerusalem; it is ruled by a monarchy, God our King, and our citizenship is there. It is our eternal home, our legal domicile.

The use of the word fatherland spoke of one's native country, the place of his/her birth, the family that came from one man. But heaven and the New Jerusalem are not about the flesh! It's about the spirit, so what this is telling us is that our country, the heavenly fatherland, speaks of our existence coming from God the Father! It is God who created us in the new birth.

The word for *declare plainly* is *emphanizo* and it meant to exhibit something, or to demonstrate something. Their words, combined with how they lived their lives as actual aliens and sojourners, was **a complete demonstration to others that they were sojourners on their way to the city of God. That is, their lives matched their testimony.**

E. Christians Are Pilgrims On Earth -

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,” 1 Peter 1:1

The word for *strangers* here is *parepidemos*, and as we have seen, has the idea of the sojourner, or the old familiar term of being a pilgrim. The word sojourner had the idea that the individual was from another land, and of a different race, and he was just passing through. Now he may spend just the night there as he traveled on, or a longer period of stay over a few weeks or months, or he might live there for a long period of time.

The length of time one spent in the land was not the issue. The issue was that he was from another country, another people, and he was just passing through their land as he was going on in his journey home to his own country!

Peter actually starts his letter with this statement, *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,” 1 Peter 1:1* A letter written to believers in the area now known as Turkey. And it reads like this, *“Peter, Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect, to the sojourners scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bythynia.”* Right off the bat he identifies these believers, and all believers as well, **as sojourners on this earth.**

He touches on the subject once again in 1 Peter 2:11, where he says, *“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”* But in this passage he uses the word *paroikos*, which they have translated as strangers, and the word *parepidemos* which they translate here as pilgrims.

And as we have seen, the word *paroikos*, meant to dwell among a foreign people in a foreign land, to live alongside people who are not of your race, a neighbor next to you who came from a different country. And the word *parepidemos* meant sojourning (traveling) in a strange place, sojourning in a foreign land away from one's own people, one who lives for a short time in a foreign land.

Where *paroikos* would emphasize being a foreigner and all that; it would look at their status of being a foreigner having short term residency in the land. While *parepidemos* would emphasize the idea that they were foreigners traveling through the land on their way to another country.

And this is the concept that all of God's people on earth have to grasp, both the OT and NT saints of God. That we are just aliens and sojourners on earth. Not in just some country on earth, but on the entire earth. What makes us aliens, foreigners, is that we do belong to a different race of people, and this is because at the new birth we were created anew in the image of Jesus Christ. God is our Father and it is He who created us.

We belong to the true God, Lord *Yahweh*, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, not the god of this world, the devil. We belong to a different country, an heavenly one. We belong to a different people, the family of God. And **our home is not on this earth.** And no matter where we live on this earth, and no matter for how long, we are sojourners ***“just passing through”***.

Pastor Mike