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# Words of Truth

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## Hebrews 11:13-16

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*“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. 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. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Hebrews 11:13-16).*

Let's begin by discussing who “these” are. So far in this chapter we have read about the faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sara. They are the “these” referenced in verse thirteen. The promises that they did not receive is again mentioned later in this chapter. Notice: *“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect”* (Hebrews 11:39-40). In this letter we have already read about how there is that better hope than those of old had obtained (Hebrews 7:19 and Hebrews 8:6).

What should stand out to us is that these people of faith were sure of the promises they could only see at a distance. They did not have clarity of view. They truly walked by faith, not by sight (II Corinthians 5:7). To understand the better promises and their seeing them afar off, consider what the inspired Apostle Peter wrote: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not*

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*unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into” (I Peter 1:3-12).*

To the disobedient Jews, Jesus said: *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad”* (John 8:56). Abraham was fully persuaded that God would fulfill His promises (Romans 4:21). Not just Abraham, but also Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Sara professed to be strangers and pilgrims on earth. Those who had that faith understood, though afar off, that their citizenship was not truly in this world (Psalms 39:12). By such a profession they were declaring that they were seeking to be elsewhere. They, like those of us faithful to God now, seek a continuing city (Hebrews 13:14).

It is interesting that the point is made in the context we are looking at that if they had been mindful from whence they came, they might have returned. Think about the message here. For Christians, you cannot put your hand to the plow and look back (Luke 9:57-62). For Jewish Christians, their ancestors had a habit of looking back. In particular, those that came out of Egypt and even generations later. They often looked back to Egypt or at the least relied upon the Egyptians (Exodus 14:1-13, Exodus 16:1-3, Exodus 17:1-3, Numbers 11:1-5, Numbers 21:5, II Kings 18:21, Isaiah 30:1-7, and Acts 7:38-39). This was a valid point to be made to Jewish Christians in the first century, because first century Jews had a bad habit of repeating their ancestors transgressions (Matthew 23:29-32 and Acts 7:51-53).

Faithful saints know better than to follow those who have done evil (III John 1:11). What we should do is look to those such as we are discussing in our study. We should look to those who through faith have an inheritance (Hebrews 6:12). That pattern of faith is to press forward to the promises of God without looking back. When we seek to “go home” it is not a home we have had in this world. Our home is being prepared for us in Heaven (John 14:1-3).

Take a moment to think about this phrase: *“But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.”* Like other passages in the Scriptures (i.e. Matthew 22:23-33), this shows life after death along with a conscious awareness. Those who had before lived faithful and have died are still looking forward to heaven. They may be in Paradise (Luke 16:19-31 and Luke 23:39-43). Yet, that is not the everlasting city they sought after wherein God was not ashamed of them (II Corinthians 5:1, Colossians 1:5, and I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

The nation of Israel’s past was sinful (Deuteronomy 9:24 and Deuteronomy 31:27). Even many generations later, God looked at them like they were harlots (Jeremiah 3:1-11 and Ezekiel 16:1-63). Some erring first century Jewish Christians caused God’s name to be blasphemed (Romans 2:17-24). God has not had a good relationship with His children of old or those that followed the ways of their fathers. Heaven is the home of the faithful. He certainly will have no shame in those who will arrive in eternity through faithfulness.