

Hebrews 11:13-16

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Those who remain faithful regard themselves as strangers on this earth, because they know there is a better heavenly country. They live by faith, believing in the promised reward.

Paul pauses here to explain more about the concept of living as strangers on this earth, looking towards the future heavenly country. All of the people in these examples did not receive God's ultimate promises before they died. They saw the promises of God in the distance and so they persisted in their walk of faith, recognizing that they lived as *strangers and exiles on the earth* since heaven was their true home. They viewed receiving the reward of the promise in the next life as a certain reality. Thus, they cultivated a desire to pursue *a better country, that is, a heavenly one*.

Abraham, for example, left what was his earthly home to go to a land that God called him to that he did not know. If Abraham had considered the land he left to be his true home, it would have been easy for him to return. But Abraham did not consider the land he left to be his home. He considered himself a stranger on earth because his true home was with God. So he lived in tents in a strange land being obedient to God. Rather than remain in comfort, he followed God and believed in the promise, although it was far off.

For those who walk in faith and obedience, *God is not ashamed to be called their God* and has already *prepared a city for them*. Back in [Hebrews 3](#), Paul explained that the Israelites who disobeyed God and died in the wilderness were unable to enter their "rest," the reward God had for them ([Deuteronomy 2:16](#)). To see our commentary on [Deuteronomy 2:16-23 Click Here](#). In contrast, God is already preparing a city for these faithful believers. This reward is not to be confused with being saved from hell to heaven. That is secure as soon as anyone trusts Christ's work on the cross for their justification before God. But believers are given the opportunity to gain a reward if they remain faithful and obedient to God. The first generation of Israelites to leave Egypt disobeyed God and so they did not receive their reward of the promised land. The believers Paul uses as an example were faithful and obedient to God that they would one day receive their reward.

Biblical Text:

¹³ All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴ For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. ¹⁵ And indeed if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.