

Looking For A City

by Anton Bosch

This sermon delves into Hebrews chapter 11, focusing on the faith of various biblical figures like Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham. It emphasizes the importance of actively participating in faith, diligently seeking God, and patiently waiting for His promises. The ultimate goal is to desire a heavenly country, like the new Jerusalem, where God dwells and where there is no more pain or suffering.

Scripture: Hebrews 11:4, Hebrews 11:5, Hebrews 11:7, Hebrews 11:8, Hebrews 11:10, Revelation 21:2, Revelation 21:21, Revelation 21:27, Hebrews 11:16

Topics: "Faith in Action", "Hope for the Heavenly Promise"

Description

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Transcript

Hebrews chapter 11 and let's read from verse 4 through chapter 16. By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts and through it he being dead still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death and was not found because God had taken him.

For before he was taken he had this testimony that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him for he who comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. By faith Noah being divinely warned of things not yet seen moved with godly fear prepared an ark for the saving of his household by which he condemned the world and became heir of righteousness which is according to faith.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance and he went out not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he waited for the city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God.

By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed and she bore a child when she was past the age because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man and him as good as

dead were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. These all died in faith not having received the promises but having seen them afar off were assured of them embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For those who seek such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland and truly if they had called to mind the country from which they had come out they would have had opportunity to return but now they desire a better that is a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared a city for them. So we ended with verse 6 last week and I think I didn't deal with the last part of verse 6 and so we want to pick up from there.

So without faith it is impossible to please God for he who comes must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. So one of the problems we have in understanding faith is that there are some people who say well faith means that I just do nothing that faith is just something that's going to just work on my behalf. No, faith is something that we need to actively participate in and you'll see that he used the word diligently and you'll remember that this word diligent is always used in the context of work in the context of something that we do and so faith results in those who diligently seek God.

So God seeks us but we need to seek God. There are those who try and put these things in two separate camps and so they say well God seeks us we don't seek him. Well that is partially true and then there are those who emphasize and say no we must seek God.

God doesn't really seek us. No, both of those things are true. God seeks us we need to be seeking him and so as we seek we will find and so faith results in a diligent faithful seeking of God.

Now in verse 7 we come to Noah and I'm not going to spend too much time on Noah because I want to use the time we have to speak about Abraham who is the next man. Now by faith Noah being divinely warned of things not yet seen moved with godly fear prepared an ark for the saving of his household. Now you remember we said from the beginning and we're going to emphasize this as we go through the book of Hebrews that faith produces work or obedience.

Faith results in obedience and so by faith Abel offered the better sacrifice obeying what God had said. By faith Enoch walked with God because God desired those who would walk with him and by faith Noah builds this ark. Now I think that we don't have to spend time speaking about this but just to remind you that the commission that Noah gets is an incredible commission because as far as we understand there had never been rain on the face of the earth.

The scripture says that the mist came up from the ground and watered the earth and so rain had never actually happened so nobody knew about rain nobody knew about about ships probably at this stage and he builds this this massive thing for a hundred years he's building this this the ship on dry land. Now today we build ships on dry land but they it's right near the near the the sea or near the river and the the ship is launched down into the sea on a slipway or different ways that they do that but Noah's just building this thing in the middle of nothing and people are shaking their heads and they're saying Noah you're crazy what's this all about and Noah says no God is going to destroy the earth with a flood and you need to get into this ark and if you get into this ark you will be saved from the wrath and the judgment of God. That's the same message we have today.

What Noah was building was a picture of Jesus. Jesus is the one who will protect us from the wrath that is to come. That is the message that we are preaching.

That is the message I've preached for 50 years. That is the message that we should continue to preach. Get into Jesus.

Get into a relationship with him and if you're in him you will be safe from the wrath to come. Jesus is our ark. He is the one who will see us through.

Unfortunately most people didn't believe him. In fact not just most people it looks like just about everybody didn't believe him and quite frankly I'm not even sure whether Noah's family remember there were eight that were saved so it's Noah and his wife his three sons and their wives. I'm not even sure that they believed him but but they they were saved because of his faith it seems.

That's just the way I understand it. I won't make a doctrine of it but they go along with him and they say well the old man's a little nuts you know but we'll we'll do whatever he's whatever he says. But eight out of the huge population because at that stage the earth is is being populated because remember they're having many many children and you have many generations alive at the same time.

Of all of the people on the earth only these eight are saved who got into the ark. But by faith he builds the ark. Now notice by being divinely warned of things not yet seen remember the definition of faith faith is the substance of things not seen.

So nobody had seen an ark nobody had seen a flood and yet he believed God when God said this is the way it's going to be. And so he is moved with godly fear. The word fear there really is is not fear in the sense that he's that he's quaking in his boots and he's scared.

It's a it's a divine respect. It's what we should all have a respect for God. When God speaks we respect him we obey him because God is not our mate.

He is not our friend in that sense that we can mess around with him. When God speaks we need to obey. There needs to be a reverence for God.

So he prepared an ark for the saving of his household by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. Now I want you to see again this is not so much about Noah's physical life being saved this is about his soul being saved. We see it's all the same concerning Cain about Abel and Enoch.

He became the heir of righteousness. We say well you know the thing about Noah was that he he escaped the judgment and he got through the through the flood and survived. No the the bottom line and the most important thing is that he became the heir of righteousness which comes through Jesus.

We're going to speak later about how these men understood the gospel and understood that Jesus would come. Now let's move on then to Abraham. So by faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out.

I think that we could probably end the sermon here by faith Abraham obeyed. That's all we need to know. Now it's going to explain how he obeyed but that's the bottom line by faith Abraham obeyed.

When he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance and he went out not knowing where he was going. So we've got to remember Abraham's situation. Abraham comes from Ur of the Chaldees which is in southern Iraq and he comes out of a very well-established city.

The ruins of Ur have been excavated. It was a modern city even by our standards. Now when we speak about a modern city the first thing we think about is electricity and Internet and they say well he didn't have that.

Well I think that was a blessing in some ways. So they didn't have electricity and Internet but they had a library. They had two or three libraries.

They had running water. They had water-borne sewage. Now just think about that.

Most of this area here doesn't even have that. We have septic tanks but they had water-borne sewage. They had three-story houses built out of stone.

This was a well-developed city. It was a modern city by any standards. We must remember that because God is now saying to him go and live in tents and the problem we have is that we contextualize these things and we say well you know Abraham was a primitive man.

This is 4,000 years ago. Remember Abraham lived 2,000 years before Christ. We're now 2,000 after Christ so 4,000 years ago.

Abraham was a primitive guy. It was no deal for him, no big deal for him to live in a tent. No it was no harder, no easier for him to live in a tent than it would be for us because he came from a civilization which was well-developed and had infrastructure.

On top of that it was a city of idols. In fact the scripture says that he was an idolater so they worshipped idols. They had many gods.

It doesn't tell us how God appeared to Abraham and God speaks to Abraham but somehow God reveals himself to Abraham and God reveals himself as the only true God as a monotheistic God just one God not many gods but one God and that he is the true and living God. Remember he doesn't have the things that we have. He doesn't have a Bible.

He doesn't have thousands of years of Christian history. He doesn't have examples of other men of faith. Nobody had gone before him.

He doesn't have the resurrection. He doesn't have the cross. He has nothing of what we have.

He just has this God who speaks to him as I said I don't know whether it was a voice whether it was a dream whether but he just has his voice and this God that he had never heard about before that he had not read because he didn't have a Bible says to him leave your city leave your family and go to a place that I will show you can you begin to imagine what goes on in this man's mind I think John Dray and Kelly have experienced a little of that as they've left their country and their family to come here but it's also a little different because they had pictures they had zoom meetings with us so they had some idea of where they're going to add some idea where they're going to stay Abraham has nothing he can't go on Google Maps and say well okay now I'm going to go over there now let me see what it looks like over there he has no clue God just says I'm going to show you where you need to go so he went out not knowing where he was going no no he's not he's not traveling aimlessly you see some Christians say well you know I don't know where I'm going I'm following Abraham's example so you know I just bump bungle along God doesn't expect us to be bungling along he doesn't expect us to be trying this and trying that God leads his people and we need to know God's voice we need to go know God's leading so Abraham isn't just saying

well let me let me think let me get right over here let me go over there no he is following God's clear instructions and God gives us instructions maybe not so much about our temporary life even though he does that also but particularly concerning our spiritual journey God gives us directions and all we need to do is follow those directions we should be pretty good at that because most of us follow Google all the time and the little lady and the lady in the little box in there tells you turn left here turn right here do go here go there and we just follow those instructions and yet when God says do this do that we don't follow the instructions and we wonder why we get lost we wonder why we don't end up what we're supposed to end up if only we listen to the voice of the Spirit directing us step by step moment by moment and so he goes out leaves everything and he goes to the place it says which he would receive as an inheritance the promised land there was just one problem the promised land was not available to him yet because it was occupied by other nations and we touched on this I think on Thursday or was it last Sunday the reason God could not give the land to Abraham at that stage was because if God took the land away from the inhabitants the Philistines and the Jebusites and the termites and all the other guys that were in there if God took the land away from them he would be unjust so God has to wait for their iniquity to rise to a level where God is justified to take the land from them remember the same thing happens to Israel when Israel eventually becomes so far from God God takes the land from them and for the last 2,000 years until 1948 the land did not belong to Israel because they had forfeited their right the same way as the nations before them had forfeited the right to occupy the land and so he would receive it as an inheritance but he never did he never owned anything verse 9 says that by faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country now just think about that contradiction God says this is your land but he lives as a stranger it's not his in fact he never inherited what this is one of the most important points which we'll touch on but maybe next week or the week after because it says that they all embrace those promises have not having received them Abraham dies without having inherited the land Abraham dies with owning not nothing except for a hole in the ground in which he buried his wife he bought a cave to bury his wife that's all he had he didn't own a square inch and yet God says this is the land now here's one of the things is that is that we must trust God even when the promises don't seem to be fulfilled because God is true now you'll see how this how this plays out and so by faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob the heirs with him of the same promise Abraham was 75 years old when he left her of the Chaldees in round numbers he was a hundred and seventy-five when he died so for a hundred years he lived in tents a hundred years can you imagine that none of us have lived a hundred years not even Roger but can you imagine living a hundred years in tents when in fact you had come from a established city and you had the resources to build your own city remember we're not talking about Abraham and his wife and a couple of donkeys Abraham has a army of soul of servants sufficient to take on four kings and to win the battle now remember when you're speaking about kings we're talking about tribal chiefs not really Kings in the sense that we understand Kings today but he's able to take on four other tribal chiefs and he's able to win the battle he has so many animals that his cousin has to separate from him because there's just not enough room for the animals all to graze he is exceedingly wealthy he has servants he has money he has political influence with the world power at that time which was Egypt and in spite of all of that he says no I'm going to live in a tent not because I like camping but because I'm trusting God and what God promised me is he was going to give me a city now folks this is absolutely vital and if you remember nothing about the Hebrews chapter 11 I pray that this will come home to us Abraham does not make his own promises true Abraham waits for God and he dies waiting he dies waiting the problem that we have in Christianity today is that most of the modern gospel says that you need to name it and claim it and you need to grab hold of God's promises and if it doesn't come through you need to cheat and cook and lie and do whatever you need to do to make those promises fulfilled

Abraham says no I'm going to just wait for God and folk we may have promises in our lives and I'm not so concerned about material things about a house or a Bentley or whatever but about spiritual things there are spiritual promises that I'm waiting for in my own life that have not been fulfilled after 50 years of preaching but I'm trusting God that God will fulfill those now the temptation is that we can that we can say well God's not coming through and remember there was a point in Abraham's life that that happened because God promised him a son and the son doesn't come and the son doesn't come and he's getting older and Sarah is getting older and there's just no way they can have a son and Abraham says well let me make a plan I have a servant woman let me take her as a concubine and let me raise up a son through her it's gonna be my son but remember God's promise was not through Hagar the book of Galatians is very clear about this the promises through Sarah and we know what happened because Abraham made his own plan to this day Israel is battling the nations around them who are the descendants of Ishmael he created not a problem a problem not just for himself for his lifetime and for his as his son Isaac because there was war between Isaac and Ishmael but he created a problem for his nation that would proceed from him that would last for 4,000 years but when we don't trust God and we make our own plans it only the results in disaster let's wait on him so by faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country we've spoken so many times about the politics that we deal with every day in this country and in other countries and the problem is that we are not willing to live as in a foreign country recognizing that we are also looking for a city the same city Abraham is looking for is a city we're looking for and we say well you know that's a long way off so let me build my own city let me build my own nation let me build my own empire no we need to wait for God and we need to be living as strangers and pilgrims how many scriptures speak about that Peter speaks about that in great detail that we are strangers and pilgrims in this world waiting for the promises of God the day we start putting down roots here is when we become like Lot's wife who was so attached to her stuff to her house to her friends to the things of this world that even when God forcibly removes her from the city her heart is still back there and she looks back and we know what happened so by faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob the heirs with him of the same promise now verse 15 and I'm skipping forward I'm getting we will come back to verse 15 in a couple of weeks time and truly if they had called to mind because this is referring to Abraham if they'd called to mind that country from which they had come out they would have had opportunity to return Lot's wife remembered where she'd come from and she said I want to be there there are two temptations that face us in the walk of faith the one is to build our own city and the other is to go back to where we came from back to the world oh but I remember her I remember the comfortable house we had there I remember my family and being able to spend time with them I remember the culture but Abraham doesn't look back he's looking forward remember Israel oh we remember the leeks and the garlicks and the cucumbers and the fish of Egypt we want to go back there you see the problem is we don't remember the bad things about the life we came out of we just remember the good stuff it's just the nature of the human mind and we say let me just go back there no Abraham doesn't look back he doesn't look down and say let me see where can I put my foundations he looks up now verse 10 for he waited how long did he wait a hundred years in fact not only did he wait a hundred years but he waited four thousand years actually five thousand years five thousand years because the city he was looking for was not at the end of his 175 year lifetime the city he was looking for would be 5,000 years in the future how do I get to 5,000 years 2,000 years to Christ 2,000 years from Christ to now at least and then another thousand years of the millennium and then the city comes so he's looking 5,000 years in the future but some of us have difficulty looking three weeks in the future 5,000 he says that's where my eyes are I'm not going to settle for something here when in fact there is something that is far greater that God has and yes it may be 5,000 years in the future but that's the promise and I don't want second best I want the best that God has for me

and God has a city and he waited for the city which had foundations why does it mention foundations because it is a substantial or substantive city it is a real city tents don't have foundations real cities have foundations spiritual cities don't have foundations real physical brick and mortar buildings have foundations so he's looking for a real city and who built the city God built the city whose builder and maker is God I don't think we can begin to grasp the the depth of this man's face the depth of his understanding of spiritual things because we have difficulty just seeing to the end of our life into eternity and yet he sees 5,000 years and he is so convinced we're going to come back to this idea later on in verses 15 and 16 but he is so convinced of God's promises that he lives as a stranger in tents waiting for the city that God would build and that God would make so where is that city it's in the book of Revelation I'm going to read a lot of Revelation a lot of scripture I'm going to read because I can't say it better than the Bible says it so in Revelation chapter 21 verse 1 and I'll make just a few comments in between now I saw a new heaven and a new earth so this is after the tribulation this is after the Millennium he sees a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there was no more sea not going to comment on all that then I John saw the holy city the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband remember in John chapter 14 Jesus says I'm going to go away I'm going to prepare a place for you he's been preparing that place and just in terms of the technicalities this earth is cleaned up it's renovated by fire and he sees a new heaven new earth basically on this globe sorry for those who don't believe we were not flat but on this globe and once this has all been renovated that city that God has been building will descend and that's what he sees and I hear heard a loud voice from heaven saying behold the tabernacle or the dwelling of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God this was what God wanted for Israel all along this is what God wants for the church verse 4 and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes and they shall be there shall be no more death nor sorrow nor crying there shall be no more pain for the former things have passed away there's 10 and he carried me away into the spirit to a great and high mountain and he showed me the great city the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God having the glory of God and her light was like a most precious stone like a jasper stone clear as crystal also she had a great and high wall with 12 gates and 12 angels at the gates names written on them which are the names of the 12 tribes of the children of Israel three gates on the east three gates on the north three gates on the south three gates on the west now the wall of the city had 12 foundations what was Abraham looking for a city that had foundations remember what Hebrew says he's not looking for a city that has a foundation he's looking for a city that has foundations the city has 12 foundations 12 layers in the foundation and on them were the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb and he talked with me and he who talked with me the angel had a gold reed to measure the city his gates and its wall why is he measuring we spoke about measuring in a different context on Thursday I think why is he measuring and we can argue about the size the size translates to about a thousand miles cube thousand miles long thousand miles wide thousand miles high the actual dimensions doesn't matter but he's measuring and he's telling us this is a physical building a physical city that can be measured can you measure spiritual things you take out a tape measure and say okay it's 32 inches long no only substantial things like a building like something that has substance can be measured and so the the spirit is telling us this is real this is not just pie in the sky this is not just some spiritual thing this is a physical building with streets of gold with mansions with light the lamb being the light of the city and so on and so he measured the city's gates and its wall the city is laid out as a square its length as great as its breadth and he measured the city with a reed 12,000 furlongs its length breadth and height are equal so it's a cube and then he measured its wall 144 cubits according to the measure of a man 20 inches that is of an angel the construction of its wall was of Jasper and the city was pure gold like clear glass can you imagine just no brick and mortar I was

wrong when I said it's built out of brick and mortar no brick and mortar no sticks and drywall this is pure gold and it's so clear so pure that it's clear as glass I can't even conceive of that the foundations of the wall and he'd spent three verses speaks about the foundations in the description of the city and this is not by coincidence this is because this is the fulfillment of what Abraham was waiting for the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones first foundation was Jasper the second Sapphire the third Chalcedony the fourth Emerald the fifth Sardonyx the sixth Sardius the seventh Chrysolite the eighth Beryl the ninth Topaz the tenth Chrysoprase the eleventh Jacinth and the twelfth Amethyst can you imagine 12 gates were 12 pearls each one individual each individual gate was of one pearl and the street of the city was pure gold like transparent glass Hebrews chapter 11 verse verse 16 as we close but now they desire a better that is a heavenly country speaking about the men of faith are we the people of faith are we desiring a better country you see the problem is that people from all over the world want to come to America we know that we know the lengths to which they will go traveling on foot for thousands of miles from South America coming to this great city great country but he says those who desire a better that is a heavenly country but because I think we've all discovered there are problems in America and you say well you know I'm going to go to Canada there's problems there and I'll go to Norway not that well there's problems there I don't know what Switzerland that's the place to you know there's problems there there's only one place that doesn't have problems there's only one place where there is no crying where there is no pain where there is no suffering where there is no death and there is only one place where we will behold the Lamb face-to-face in the heavenly Jerusalem and so they desire a better country what are we looking for are we looking for something here on this earth like the Israelites you're looking down and looking in the sand looking for the leeks and the garlicks and the onions and the radishes and stuff or are we looking up and saying we're trusting God therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God for he has prepared a city for them father we pray that these things may be real well it's easy to look at men of like Abraham and say well he was a lived in a different time he was a different man Lord you're expecting the same faith from us Lord I pray that you'd help us to have our eyes fixed on that new Jerusalem have our eyes fixed on heaven Lord that we may not settle to build for building our own city that we may not that we may not be discouraged to go back to where we've come from but Lord that we may have our eyes fixed on the eternal reward nor that we may live by faith obeying you step by step Lord when you call of us call us to to leave our comfort zones to go into a area that we don't know we don't understand and I'm not speaking geographically but spiritually Lord help us to obey when you ask us to do things that we don't we've never done before like building an ark Lord help us to do what you tell us to do that we may be men and women of faith who trust you who believe you and simply follow your instructions Lord it's so hard when we want to make our own plans do our own thing but help us to walk and to live by faith as these men did Lord that we that you may not be ashamed to call us your God we know that you're proud of Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and the other men and women that we still going to speak about you're proud of them you're not ashamed to be called their God Lord I pray that we that you would not be ashamed of us individually and corporately or that you'd not be ashamed of our church that you not be ashamed of each one of us but Lord that you would look at us the same way as you looked at your son this is my beloved son and whom I'm well pleased hearing him and so Lord I pray that these things may become real that they may become life-changing things that we may live our lives as people of faith and not people of the world and of the flesh we ask this in Jesus name I pray that you'd go with us now Lord keep us and protect us bring us together again safely on Thursday in Jesus name I pray amen

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