

LESSON 3

We Are Looking for a City

Hebrews 13:14

For we do not have an enduring city here; instead, we seek the one to come, Hebrews 13:14.

Class Overview: This lesson emphasizes the temporary nature of life on earth and the Christian's call to seek the eternal city God has prepared. Drawing from Hebrews 13:14, we will consider how earthly "cities" and securities inevitably fade, but the city of God endures forever. By learning to live as pilgrims and strangers here, we strengthen our faith, reorient our priorities, and fix our eyes on the city to come.

Class Objectives:

By the end of this class, you should be able to:

1. Explain the meaning of Hebrews 13:14 in its context.
 2. Contrast the temporary nature of earthly "cities" with the permanence of God's city.
 3. Describe what it means to actively "seek" the city to come.
 4. Apply the biblical concept of living as pilgrims and strangers to daily life.
 5. Reflect on how the hope of heaven provides strength to endure trials and reorders priorities.
-

Introduction

One of the most challenging aspects of the Christian life is remembering that this world is not our ultimate home. We get settled. We put down roots. We start to measure our security by jobs, houses, routines, or possessions. But Hebrews 13:14 reminds us: *"For we do not have an enduring city here; instead, we seek the one to come."*

That statement concludes the letter to the Hebrews, written to Christians who were weary and tempted to return to their old ways. They were pressured by culture, weighed down by persecution, and discouraged by hardships. The writer's answer wasn't to tell them to make this life easier; it was to lift their eyes higher. There is no lasting city here. Nothing on earth will endure. But there is a city to come, and that is where our hope lies.

We know what it's like to want stability. We build cities, systems, and safety nets because we long for permanence. Yet everything here eventually fades . . . nations rise and fall, economies crash, homes decay, even our bodies wear out. Only the city God has prepared will last.

This lesson invites us to reflect on how we live as people seeking the eternal city. Just like Abraham looked for a city with foundations (Hebrews 11:10), we now confess that our citizenship is not here but in heaven (Philippians 3:20). That perspective shapes our priorities, our endurance, and our mission.

What are some things we tend to treat as permanent in this life, but that Hebrews 13:14 reminds us are only temporary?

The Temporary Nature of Earthly Cities

Hebrews 13:14 begins with a blunt reminder: *“For we do not have an enduring city here.”*

Throughout history, people have built cities as symbols of security, strength, and permanence. But no matter how great they appeared, none of them lasted.

Take **Babylon** for example. At its peak, Babylon was the most magnificent city in the ancient world. It stood along the Euphrates River with massive double walls—so wide that chariots could ride across them. Its gates, like the famous Ishtar Gate, were covered in brilliant blue tiles decorated with lions and dragons. Ancient writers described its hanging gardens as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Babylon was the center of power, wealth, and learning. It looked invincible.

But its greatness didn’t last. Corruption and arrogance weakened it, and God’s prophets announced its downfall (Isaiah 13:19-22; Jeremiah 51). In 539 B.C., the Persians diverted the Euphrates River, marched in under the walls, and the city fell overnight. From there, it declined, was abandoned, and eventually became a wasteland. Today, Babylon is nothing but ruins in Iraq; a reminder that even the mightiest “enduring” city of men cannot stand forever.

The same principle applies to our personal lives. We build routines, gather possessions, invest in careers, and imagine stability. Yet all of it is temporary. Homes crumble. Health declines. Wealth disappears. As James 4:14 reminds us, *“You don’t even know what tomorrow will bring—what your life will be! For you are like vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes.”*

This isn’t meant to make us despair. It’s intended to reset our expectations. If we are looking for lasting security here, we will always be disappointed. Earthly “cities” cannot endure. Only God’s city is eternal.

Application:

- Don’t cling too tightly to what cannot last.
- Recognize that disappointment often comes when we expect permanence from temporary things.
- Let the passing nature of this world push you to long more deeply for the world to come.

How does Babylon’s story remind us that nothing on earth is truly permanent?

Seeking the City to Come

Hebrews 13:14 doesn’t just tell us what we *don’t* have—an enduring city here. It also tells us what we *do* have: *“Instead, we seek the one to come.”*

From the Text

1. Seeking implies pursuit

- The Greek word suggests a steady searching, longing, and striving after. It's not passive—it's active. We are not just *waiting* for heaven; we are *seeking* it.
- Colossians 3:1-2 says, "*So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is ... Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*"

2. The city is future—but certain

- Hebrews 12:22-23 already calls us citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. In one sense, we belong there now. In another sense, we are still on the way.
- Like Abraham, we confess we are strangers here because our true home is still ahead.

3. Seeking changes priorities

- If we are seeking the city to come, we will invest in what lasts: God's word, God's people, and God's mission.
- Jesus said, "*But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven ... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (Matthew 6:20-21).

Application:

- Seeking heaven means orienting our lives toward eternity, not just drifting along with the present.
- It challenges us to evaluate our choices: Am I living like my citizenship is here—or there?
- Seeking heaven doesn't make us useless here; it makes us faithful, because we know what really matters.

What does it look like, in practical terms, to "seek the city to come" in daily life?

Living as Pilgrims

Seeking the city to come means accepting the reality that we are *not at home here*. Scripture often uses the language of pilgrimage to describe the Christian life.

- **Hebrews 11:13-16** reminds us that Abraham and the faithful "confessed that they were foreigners and temporary residents on the earth." They admitted they didn't belong here, and God honored them for it.
- **1 Peter 2:11** calls believers "strangers and exiles" and urges us to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul. Peter's point: live differently, because you belong somewhere else.
- **Philippians 3:20** says our citizenship is in heaven. Whatever earthly passport we carry, our true identity is tied to Christ.

What does this mean for us?

1. Pilgrims travel light

- Pilgrims don't put down permanent roots. They hold possessions loosely because they know they're temporary.

2. Pilgrims endure hardship

- The journey isn't always easy, but the destination is worth it.

3. Pilgrims live with direction

- They don't wander aimlessly—they keep their eyes fixed on the city that lies ahead.

Application:

- Living as pilgrims reshapes our daily priorities. We live holy lives, endure trials, and keep moving forward because heaven is our goal.
- It also reshapes our witness. When others see us living differently—refusing to cling too tightly to this world—they see evidence of our hope in Christ.

What is one way you can live more like a "pilgrim" this week, showing that your real home is in the city to come?

Conclusion: Fixing Our Eyes on the City to Come

Hebrews 13:14 is both a warning and a promise. The warning: *"We do not have an enduring city here."* Nothing in this world lasts. Every city, every system, every possession eventually fades. The promise: *"Instead, we seek the one to come."* There is a city that will endure, built by God Himself, prepared for His people.


Like Abraham, we live in tents. Like the early Christians, we are strangers and exiles here. But our eyes are set on something better—a homeland, a heavenly city where God dwells with His people forever. That hope gives us strength to endure, courage to obey, and direction for our lives today.


So don't settle for less. Don't treat what is temporary as permanent. Instead, live as pilgrims who keep moving forward. We are not home yet—but one day, we will be.


Christians are strangers here because our true home is the city to come.

For Discussion


1. Why do we often treat earthly things as if they will last forever, even when Scripture says they won't?


 _____


 _____


 _____

2. How does the fall of great cities like Babylon remind us of the truth in Hebrews 13:14?


 _____


 _____


 _____

 _____

3. What does it practically mean to “seek the city to come” in your daily life?


 _____

 _____


 _____

 _____

4. How can living as strangers and pilgrims influence the way we handle possessions, struggles, or relationships?

 _____


 _____

 _____

 _____

5. What specific changes might you need to make to live more like a pilgrim on the way to God’s city?

 _____

 _____

 _____

 _____