

Hebrews 11:8-10

End Times: Heaven – The Dwelling Place of God

October 19-20, 2014

⁸ By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

When he was 88 years old, the late Supreme Court Justice Oliver Holmes found himself on a train. The conductor called for ticket, but the Justice couldn't find his ticket. He seemed visibly upset. He searched his pockets and fumbled through his wallet. But he couldn't find his ticket. The conductor knew who he was and was sympathetic. ***"Don't worry, Mr. Holmes,"*** he said. ***"The Pennsylvania railroad trusts you. When you get to your destination, you will probably find your tickets, and you can mail it to us."*** The conductor's kindness didn't seem to put the Justice's mind at ease. ***"My dear man, my problem is not "Where is my ticket?" but rather "Where am I going?"***

Unfortunately, there are times in life that we may feel like that. We go forward through life facing all kinds of changing situations. We face ups and we face downs. There are days that we face huge challenges. There are days that everything seems to fall into place. One minute we are laughing. Another minute we are crying. We look at the mess that we may find ourselves in, and we find ourselves thinking: ***"This isn't fair!"*** Even a little child has figured out the concept of "fairness." Give one child a cookie and give another child 3 cookies, and you may just hear those words: ***"Hey, that isn't fair. Why does he get more?"*** We adults ask the same questions: ***"Why does that neighbor of mine always seems to have more? I work just as hard. I put in more hours than he. Yet, I don't I don't make nearly what he makes? It's not fair!"***

Do you ever feel lost in life? A number of years ago on vacation, we drove into New York City without a map (and no GPS). Even though we had never been there before, I thought that there has to be signs along the road to figure out where we were going. After all, how hard can it be? It didn't take long to realize that I had no idea where I was going. It is so easy to go through life having no idea where we are going. As we go through the stress of life, the wrestling of the idea of *fairness* of life, and the feeling of being lost, it is important that we keep our eyes on the final destination of life – heaven. So, this morning, as we continue to look at what God has to say about **End Times**, let us learn from Abraham, and see how we can keep moving forward in life toward **Heaven – The Dwelling Place of God**.

When we first meet Abraham in the Bible, we find him living 4,000 years ago in a place called Ur of the Chaldees. It was a city located on the banks of the Euphrates River, not far from the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Ur was a world-class city. It was the center of mathematics, astronomy, commerce and philosophy. It had everything. Life had been good for Abraham and his wife, Sarah. They had been successful and prosperous. They had accumulated substantial wealth. Then God comes to this 75 year old man and says: ***"Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you."*** (Genesis 12:1-2)

Why would he want to do that? Why would he pack up his comfortable life, leave his friends, his career, his traditions, his home, his influence and his country and just go? At that point, God hasn't even told him where he was going. He just says: Go! Abraham goes. This 75 year old man goes with his wife, who hasn't had any children, and believes that he will be the father of ***"a great nation,"*** because God says so. I have no doubt that there were people telling Abraham: ***"You must be crazy!"***

Maybe the crazier question would be: ***"Would you go if you were Abraham?"*** Think about that for a moment. Would you go? Some studies have said that an average worker will make 3-5 career changes in their life. People change jobs and re-locate for all kinds of different reasons. Sometimes, they are forced to; sometimes, they choose to. But what God asks Abraham to is crazy. Go – but I will tell you where to go along the way. Go – I will make you a great nation, but you have no children. Go – even though you are 75 years old.

How does he do that? **First** of all, he goes by faith. He trusts God and his promises. There will be no **Welcome Home Abraham** signs at the end of this journey. There will be no band playing to welcome him into the Promised Land. He goes trusting in God's promises. **Secondly**, he knows that he doesn't go alone. God had told him to go on this journey, and he trusts that God will go with him as well. This wasn't going to be easy. He was going to be tested. He would have to rescue his nephew, Lot, who was going with him. He would see Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed. He was going to be asked to sacrifice his Son, only to be stopped at the last minute by God himself. He wouldn't even see all of God's promises fulfilled when he died at the age of 175.

Finally, he would go because **"he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."** He looked forward to a **city**, not a place in the desert in a tent. He looked forward to a city that had **foundations**, a place with security and permanent walls. He was looking forward to a city **whose architect and builder is God**. There is only ONE place that meets all those qualifications. It is the place that God has built for us with our very own rooms. It is the city that the Apostle John describes in Revelation: **"Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."** (Rev. 21:3-4)

How do we go through this life? How do we get through the ups and downs? How do we get through all the unfairnesses of this life? How do we go when we feel lost? You go **looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God**. You go with Jesus, who laid down his life for you on the cross. You go with a God, who has always kept his promises. This isn't going to be easy. It is journey worth making because we do it keeping our eyes on the home, the city built by God himself for his believers. Amen.