

Hebrews 11:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

Analysis

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. The patriarchs' words and actions 'declare plainly' (emphanizousin, ἐμφανίζουσιν, 'make manifest' or 'show clearly') that they were pilgrims seeking a homeland beyond this world. Their confession of being 'strangers and pilgrims' (v.13) revealed hearts set on heavenly realities, not earthly possessions. The Greek *patrída* (πατρίδα, 'country' or 'homeland') signifies belonging, citizenship, and ultimate allegiance, not merely geographic location.

By living as temporary residents in Canaan, dwelling in tents, and refusing to settle permanently despite having opportunity, the patriarchs testified through lifestyle that their true home lay elsewhere. This pilgrim mentality characterized their entire existence—they held earthly possessions loosely, prioritized God's promises over immediate comfort, and oriented hopes toward eternal inheritance. Their faith wasn't merely intellectual assent but a whole-life orientation toward God's future grace.

This principle applies to all believers. We are 'strangers and pilgrims on the earth' (1 Peter 2:11), citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20) whose 'citizenship is in heaven' (Philippians 3:20). Our confession through word and deed should make plain that we seek a better country. The Puritans called this 'heavenly-mindedness'—not impractical escapism but proper valuation of eternal over temporal realities, enabling faithful earthly living by keeping ultimate priorities clear.

Historical Context

The patriarchs lived as nomads in Canaan for generations, never possessing the land God promised except small burial plots. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob dwelt in portable tents, moved frequently, and owned little permanent property. This temporary, unsettled existence contrasted sharply with surrounding peoples who built permanent cities and established kingdoms. Yet the patriarchs voluntarily chose this lifestyle in obedience to God's call, demonstrating that faith values future divine promises over present earthly security. For first-century believers facing persecution and displacement, this example powerfully encouraged prioritizing eternal over temporal concerns.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What aspects of your life and speech 'declare plainly' what country you truly seek—earthly comfort or heavenly glory?
2. How should the reality that we are pilgrims affect our relationship with money, possessions, and earthly success?
3. What practical changes would demonstrate that you value eternal realities above temporary circumstances?

Interlinear Text

οἱ	γὰρ	τοιαῦτα	λέγοντες	ἐμφανίζουσιν	ὅτι	πατρίδα
G3588	For	such things	they that say	declare plainly	that	a country
G1063		G5108	G3004	G1718	G3754	G3968

ἐπιζητοῦσιν
they seek
G1934

