

Hebrews 13:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

Analysis

For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. This verse grounds the previous exhortation in believers' pilgrim status. 'Here' (hōde, ὅδε) refers to this present world. 'No continuing city' (ou...menousan polin, οὐ...μένουσαν πόλιν, 'no abiding city' or 'no permanent city') indicates earthly cities, nations, and civilizations are temporary. Even Jerusalem, where temple stood, wasn't believers' permanent home. Nothing in this world lasts.

'But we seek one to come' (tēn mellousan epizētoumen, τὴν μέλλουσαν ἐπιζητοῦμεν) contrasts earthly impermanence with heavenly permanence. We actively 'seek' (epizētoumen, present tense—continuous action) the coming city—the heavenly Jerusalem, the city whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10, 16). This future city is certain though not yet fully realized, motivating present pilgrimage and sacrifice.

This truth has profound implications. If no earthly city is permanent, we shouldn't invest ultimate allegiance, identity, or hope in any nation, culture, or civilization. We're temporary residents everywhere, citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20). This frees us from both despair when earthly kingdoms fail and idolatry when they succeed. Political systems, economic structures, cultural achievements—all temporary. Only God's kingdom abides. This pilgrim mentality characterized Puritans ('We are strangers here; heaven is our home') and should mark all believers.

Historical Context

Ancient world featured impressive cities—Rome, Alexandria, Athens, Jerusalem—centers of power, culture, and religion. Jerusalem held special significance for Jews as God's chosen city, David's capital, temple site. Yet Hebrews declares even Jerusalem isn't permanent (fulfilled dramatically in 70 AD destruction). The 'city to come' references Revelation 21-22's New Jerusalem, descending from heaven, where God dwells with His people eternally. Early Christians' detachment from earthly cities partly explains their resilience under persecution—losing earthly homes didn't devastate them because they sought heavenly homeland. Church fathers like Augustine (City of God) developed this theme, distinguishing between earthly and heavenly cities. This pilgrim theology has sustained believers through countless earthly upheavals.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing that no earthly city is permanent affect your political engagement and cultural attachments?
2. In what ways are you actively seeking the city to come through prayer, hope, and kingdom-focused living?
3. What earthly securities or identities must you hold more loosely, remembering you're a pilgrim seeking a better country?

Interlinear Text

οὐ	γὰρ	ἔχομεν	ἄδε	μένουσαν	πόλιν	ἀλλὰ	τὴν
no	For	have we	here	continuing	city	but	G3588
G3756	G1063	G2192	G5602	G3306	G4172	G235	
μέλλουσαν						ἐπιζητοῦμεν	
						to come	we seek one
						G3195	G1934

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 3:20 (Parallel theme): For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Hebrews 12:22 (Parallel theme): But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

Ephesians 2:19 (Parallel theme): Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Hebrews 4:9 (Parallel theme): There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

1 Corinthians 7:29 (Parallel theme): But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

Micah 2:10 (Parallel theme): Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.