

INTRODUCTION: Shakespeare In The Park.

TEXTS: Heb 11:8-10, 13-16, 24-26; 1Pe 2:11.

In this lesson we will discuss three principles and their importance, make three applications, and conclude with an analogy.

THREE PRINCIPLES:

1. A Christian's home is heaven. Php 3:20.

A. Even though Christians living on earth have never been to heaven that is their home, where they are from, where they are going, and where they will finally feel like they are where they belong.

B. As one has put it, Christians are not citizens of this world trying to make their way to heaven; rather, they are citizens of heaven trying to make their way through this world. They should live like people on a journey home where they know the lights are on, the door is open, and their Father eagerly awaits their arrival.

2. A Christian is in the world, but not of the world. Joh 17:14-16.

A. As the song says, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing thro."

B. We will use the word "world" or "earth" at least three ways. To refer to ...

1) The unredeemed who live on the planet as in, "The world has hated them."

2) The planet on which we live as in, "This world is not my home."

3) A combination of the first two as in, "I do not ask You to take them out of the world."

3. A Christian is a stranger, an exile, an alien on the earth.

A. "Strangers" in Heb 11:13 is xenos "a foreigner, stranger" (Thayer).

B. "Exiles" in Heb 11:13 and "strangers" in 1Pe 2:11 is parepidemos "persons sojourning for a brief season in a foreign country ... Christians ... having their citizenship in heaven ... it implies a sense of transitoriness, as of one who passes by to something beyond" (Vincent adapted).

C. "Aliens" in 1Pe 2:11 is paroikos "a stranger, foreigner, one who lives in a place without a right of citizenship ... metaph. ... one who lives on earth as a stranger, a sojourner on the earth ... Christians, whose fatherland is heaven" (Thayer). "The paroikos ... was a resident alien; he was a man who had come to stay in a place but who had never become a naturalized citizen; he paid tax for the privilege of existing in a land which was not his own. He might stay there and he might work there, but he was a stranger and an outsider whose home was somewhere else" (Barclay).

D. "Sojourners" are people who temporarily stay or reside in a place.

E. "Pilgrims" are people who journey in foreign lands.

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF THESE THREE PRINCIPLES:

These three principles—heaven is a Christian's home; a Christian is in the world but not of it; and a Christian is a stranger, exile, and alien in the world—are vitally important because we cannot simultaneously love or serve the best interests of the world and heaven.

Why not? The world acts as if life on earth is an end unto itself—that it has no greater purpose. Heaven acts as if life on earth is a means to a end—that it serves a greater divine purpose. Not only is the world wrong and heaven right, but their ends are diametrically opposed to one another. Means intended to serve the best interests of one often defeat the purposes of the other. Apply to denying Christ or dying.

When we become a Christian we vow to love heaven, but since we are in the world we must be extremely careful or we will allow its lusts to influence us to serve the interests of earth rather than heaven. 1Jo 2:15-17.

THREE APPLICATIONS OF THESE PRINCIPLES:

1. We must honestly assess if we are at home in the world or if by our words and deeds we are confessing that we are strangers and exiles on earth. If we objectively answer the following questions they should help us decide where we are on the "home in the world or in heaven continuum" and in what direction we are headed.

A. If we had to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that we are strangers, exiles, aliens, sojourners, or pilgrims, could we offer enough evidence to convince a fair-minded jury of our peers? In other words when we sing, "this world is not my home" are we walking the walk or just talking the talk?

B. What are we passionate about? What do we make time to do? What do we think about when we have time to just set and think? Can we talk in far more depth about sports or celebrities than we can about scriptures? Do we? Is our career a means of serving God, our family, our brethren, and our fellow man or do we neglect them pursuing what is best for our career? Are our R & R activities ends unto themselves or means to heavenly ends? Do we understand and act consistent with the truth that the most important thing is to keep the most important thing the most important thing and that the greatest danger to the most important thing is usually not something that is inherently sinful but the second or third most important thing? Do we understand and act consistent with the truth that earthly things have a place or God would

not have created them, but that we must always be diligent to keep them in their place lest they displace the higher heavenly priorities God created them to serve?

C. Are we laying up treasures on earth or somewhere beyond the blue, i.e. in heaven? Mat 6:19-21.

D. Like Moses (Heb 11:24-26) and the widow with two small coins (Mar 12:41-44), can we give concrete examples of our storing up treasures for ourselves in heaven to the significant detriment of our ability to store up treasures for ourselves on earth?

E. Like Lot (2Pe 2:7-8) are we oppressed by the sensual conduct we see and hear while living among unprincipled men and is our soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds?

F. Does the world view us as people who are not driven by what drives them, who do not think, feel, look, speak, and act like they do? Does the world hate us because we are in the world but not of it? Have we suffered because we are different? Joh 15:19; 17:14; Psa 69:8-9; 1Pe 2:11-12A; Gen 19:9B.

G. Can we increasingly sing in truth, "I can't feel at home in this world anymore."

H. Do we long to go home, i.e. to heaven? Leon's point of view vs. Paul's. 2Co 5:2; 5:8; Php 1:21-24.

1) In an article entitled, "A Christian's View of Death," Bob Buchanan wrote: 'I cannot help but recall a story that happened several years ago. A friend of mine had received word from his doctor that he had cancer and would die within a couple of years. While most people were sending cards and letters expressing their sorrow and regrets, he received one letter from an aged preacher that said: "I want to send my congratulations! I just received word that you will soon be going to that wonderful home that you have worked so hard for all these years. We're going to miss you, but we are happy for you. You'll never have to worry about pain and sorrow any more." What would have been our reaction to a letter like that? Do we sorrow as those which have no hope? Or do we look forward to going home?'

2) Thinking About Home.

"A penny for your thoughts," I said to the old man, as he sat there on the park bench all alone. With silvered hair and wrinkled brow, eyes gleaming, he smiled and said, "Just thinking about my home."

I sat down and we shared some laughs together, and a cinema of remembrance it did roll. We talked about life's gains and its losses, but mostly he just talked about his home.

He said, "I'm thinking about home. Thinking about going home. Dreaming about leaving here. Ready to be moving on. It won't be long before the sun will set and I'll be gone. But until then, I'll be thinking about home."

I said, "Tell me old man where's your home and what's it like?" He said, "Oh, ain't nothing around here that compares. You see a King had it built and gave the deed to me. And all my family's already there."

"And I'm thinking about home. Thinking about going home. Dreaming about leaving here. Ready to be moving on. It won't be long before the sun will set and I'll be gone. But until then, I'll be thinking about home."

"It won't be long until the sun goes down and I'll be gone. I'm thinking about home."

2. We must increasingly become strangers, exiles, and aliens on earth by deepening our faith that God is real, the Bible is His word, heaven will surely be worth it all, a man profits nothing if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul, etc. 2Co 4:18-5:1; 5:7; Heb 11:8, 24. To this end we must ...

A. Study the word of God. Psa 119:19, 54.

B. Act in perfect keeping with what God says in His word and with the commitment we made to Him when He saved us from our sins. Heb 13:12-14; 1Pe 2:11. Whole hearted obedience deepens faith. Anything less weakens it. Illustrate with Moses vs. the rich young ruler.

C. Never look back. Col 3:1-2; Heb 10:32-39. Illustrate with Abraham vs. Lot's wife and the children of Israel in the wilderness (the fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and the garlic).

D. Pray. Joh 17:14-16.

E. Not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. 2Co 6:14. 1Co 15:33; Psa 101:2B-8; fill the void with A-D above + Heb 3:13.

3. We must let our lights shine. 1 Pet 2:11-12.

CONCLUSION:

"The world has inconsolable longing. It tries to satisfy the longing with scenic vacations, accomplishments of creativity, stunning cinematic productions, sexual exploits, sports extravaganzas, hallucinogenic drugs, ascetic rigors, managerial excellence, etc. But the longing remains. What does this mean? C. S. Lewis answers: 'If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world'" (Piper).

This is the explanation. We are made for another world and life on earth is nothing more than our God-given means of attaining this end, of getting to this other world. Ecc 3:1-8, 11.

"The soul has its hunger and thirst; these desires were built into man at creation ... Augustine said it perfectly: 'Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.' Just as it is normal for the deer to thirst after the water brooks, so it is natural for man to thirst after God. He may not know that his thirst is for God, and he will probably try to satisfy that thirst with a substitute that will leave him with more thirst. But a thirst for God is what it is, just the same. God has put eternity in our hearts, and the temporal cannot satisfy" (Wiersbe).

Do people go to military bootcamp to simply go to basic training? No, they go to military bootcamp because they want to join the armed services and because the military has carefully designed basic training to determine if they are fit to do so.

Imagine how messed up military bootcamp would be if people in it were only in it to be in it—if they thought and acted like military bootcamp was a permanent station instead of a temporary duty assignment—imagine the vanity, the emptiness, the futility of leaving home to go to military bootcamp and after completing it returning home and realizing nothing has changed, that you are in exactly in the same place you were before you left, that you might as well have stayed home for all the difference it made.

Life on earth is bootcamp for heaven. God, not time and chance, put people on earth and He did not put us on earth to simply to live on earth. No, God put people on earth because He wants us to enter heaven and He has carefully designed life on earth to determine if people are fit to enter heaven. Imagine how messed up life on earth would be if people on earth thought the only reason they were on earth was to live on earth.

But we don't have to imagine. King Solomon, using all his unprecedented wisdom and wealth, once did what John Lennon asked us to do in his famous song and imagined there was no God, no heaven, no hell, no religion—just people living for today. But Solomon did more than imagine it, he actually lived just for today, i.e. without thought of God, heaven, hell, or religion, and did so as fully as anyone ever has or ever will.

The result, however, was anything but what John Lennon imagined. Instead of all the people living life in peace, Solomon concluded that such a life was “vanity of vanities! All is vanity” (Eccl 1:2). The Hebrew word translated “vanity” is *hevel*. It means emptiness, futility, vapor. It describes things that quickly disappear, leave nothing behind, and do not satisfy. *Hevel* perfectly describes people who put the best interests of life on earth—the means to life in heaven—above the best interests of life in heaven—the end to life on earth.

But we don't need Solomon to tell us how messed up life on earth would be if people on earth lived as if the only reason they were on earth was to live on earth, i.e. if people just lived for today without thought of God, heaven, hell, or religion. All we have to do is open our eyes and look and open our ears and listen. Evidence for how messed up such lives are is all around us and to varying degrees even within us.

“We Americans have more to make life easy than any people who have ever lived. We live in the finest houses, wear the nicest clothes, and eat the best food that any generation has ever known; yet, at the same time, today we have more suicides, more divorces, more people in jail, more mental illnesses than any people of all time. For many people, life is a grim, desperate, unhappy affair” (Charles Allen).

Ecc 12:13-14 reminds people on earth that it is utter folly to live on earth as if living on earth is what life on earth is all about.

It is so sad that we cannot go to Shakespeare in the park and actually hear Shakespeare in the park. Yes, that is the world we live in but we must not be of the world. Brethren, true Christians are strangers, exiles, and aliens on the earth. The question for us is simply, “Are we?” Everything we claim to hold near and dear depends on our answer. So when we sing, “This world is not my home I'm just passing through My treasures are laid up Somewhere beyond the blue The Angels beckon me From Heaven's open door And I can't feel at home In this world anymore” let us sing what we mean and mean what we sing!