

Confessing that We are Pilgrims

Introduction:

A. "Here We Are But Straying Pilgrims" Hymn

1. Heb. 11:13-16
2. The effect of the hardships of life is that we develop a longing for heaven and courage to bear with life's trials.
3. The Bible frequently teaches that life on earth is a pilgrimage.

B. What is a pilgrim?

1. Pilgrim comes from Latin peregrinus; it is a traveler (literally one who has come from afar) who is on a journey to a holy place.
2. Typically, this is a physical journey to some place of special significance to the follower of a particular religious belief system.
3. In Christianity, pilgrim and pilgrimage often refers to life in this world as a period of exile
4. While many religious pilgrims travel toward a specific destination, a physical location is not a necessity. One group of pilgrims in early Celtic Christianity were the Peregrinari Pro Christae, (Pilgrims for Christ), or "white martyrs." They left their homes to wander in the world. This sort of pilgrimage was an ascetic religious practice, as the pilgrim left the security of home for an unknown destination, trusting Divine Providence
5. Many religions still practice pilgrimage as a spiritual activity. The Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca is obligatory for every able bodied Muslim.
6. Currently practiced is the cultural pilgrimage, which includes historic sites of national or cultural importance, or the location of a pivotal event or an iconic destination. A baseball fan visiting Cooperstown, New York, Auschwitz concentration camp, Gettysburg Battlefield, the Ernest Hemingway House or even Disneyland.
7. Secular pilgrims also exist under communist regimes, visiting such places as the Mausoleum of Lenin or Mausoleum of Mao Zedong, or the Birthplace of Karl Marx.

C. Classic American understanding of pilgrims

1. About 100 people, many of them seeking religious freedom in the New World, set sail from England on the Mayflower in September 1620. The ship landed on the shores of Cape Cod, in present-day Massachusetts. A scouting party was sent out, and in late December the group landed at Plymouth Harbor, where they would form the first permanent settlement of Europeans in New England. These original settlers of Plymouth Colony are known as the Pilgrim Fathers, or simply as the Pilgrims. The group that set out from Plymouth, in southwestern England, in September 1620 included 35 members of a radical Puritan faction known as the English Separatist Church. In 1607, after illegally breaking from the Church of England, the Separatists settled in the Netherlands, first in Amsterdam and later in the town of Leiden, where they remained for ten years under the relatively lenient Dutch laws. Due to economic difficulties, as well as fears that they would lose their English language and heritage, they began to make plans to settle in the New World. They came seeking religious freedom.

D. The difference between pilgrims of this world and pilgrims in this world

1. Pilgrims of this world travel about in this world to destinations in this world seeking for spiritual fulfillment from places in this world.
2. Pilgrims in this world live in this world without traveling to destinations in this world because they know that spiritual fulfillment is not to be found in this world. They know that life in this world is the journey and that their destination is heaven

I. BIBLE PILGRIM AND PILGRIMAGE DEFINED

- A. Pilgrim - "One who journeys in alien lands; wayfarer" (Webster's 7th New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 641)
 1. Pilgrim - Parepidemos - "an alien alongside, a resident foreigner, stranger" (Strongs) - Heb. 11:13; 1Peter 1:1
 2. "Used metaphorically of those to whom Heaven is their own country, and who are sojourners in earth" (Vine 's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, p. 865)
 3. "One who comes from a foreign country into a city or land to reside there by the side of the natives; hence stranger; sojourning in a strange place" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 488)
 4. Abraham - Gen. 12:1, 23:1-6
 5. Strangers - "Xenos - foreign, literally alien, a guest, stranger" (Strongs)
- B. Pilgrimage - "The journey of a pilgrim; the course of life on earth" (Smith's)
 1. Magur (Hebrew) - "The sense of lodging; a temporary abode; in contrast to a permanent residence; a dwelling where one may sojourn as a stranger" (Strong's Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary, p. 61)
 2. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - Ex. 6:1-4
 3. Sojourn - mowshab - "a site, a session, an abode for a place or a time" (Strongs) - Ex. 12:40

II. OUR LIFE IS TO BE A PILGRIMAGE

- A. We are not to look upon our life on this earth as the totality of our existence.
 1. It is but a brief, transitory period that takes us from our birth to our death and then on to our ultimate destiny - James 4:13-15
 2. As pilgrims, we are foreigners on earth.
 3. In the anonymous Epistle to Diognetus in the second century, the following is written concerning Christians: "They inhabit their own country, but as sojourners; they take part in all things as citizens, and endure all things, as aliens; every foreign country is theirs, and every country is foreigner" (Wuest's Word Studies in the NT, p. 523)
- B. This life is temporary.
 1. The physical body is but an earthly tent - 2Peter 1:13-15; Psalm 90:10
 2. Skene - "a tent, booth, tabernacle" (Vine, 1126)
 3. Phil. 1:23 - The word he uses for "to depart" is analuein - "...striking camp, loosening the tent ropes, pulling up the tent pins and moving on "Paul's human body was the tent in which he was living. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived in tents. A tent speaks of a pilgrim's journey.

- They were looking for a permanent place of abode” (Wuest, V. III, p. 39)
5. “The word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14)
 - a. Dwelt (eskenosen) means “to pitch a tent”

III. CONDITIONS OF BEING A PILGRIM

- A. Separation or alienation from the world. The Christian must view himself as a foreigner in the world and among its citizens.
 1. We must live in the world without becoming part of it - John 17:11-16
 2. We must be subject to the law without being overcome by it - Phil. 3:20; Acts 4:18-20, 5:29
 3. We must pass our time here in fear - 1Peter 1:17, 2:11-12
- B. Realize the brevity of life - 2Cor. 6:2; Rom. 13:11-12
- C. Focus completely on the end of the journey - Col. 3:1-4; Rev. 21:1-3