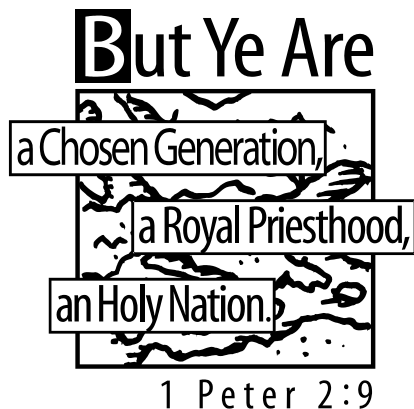


# SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

## LESSON 11



## STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS ON THE EARTH

*Scripture Texts: Hebrews 11:8-16; 1 Peter 2:9-11; 1 John 2:15-17*

Our conversation is in Heaven. God's people are hid with Christ in God. Their lives are anchored in Heaven. Their citizenship is there (**Philippians 3:20**). This is what all Christians have in common that makes their fellowship possible. Saints of God are oddballs, misfits, square pegs in round holes, so to speak. This is because the world does not know them. Jesus calls saints salt, light, and a city on a hill. God's people are citizens of Heaven and dependent upon God.

**MEMORY VERSE:** *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* — **1 John 3:1**

### Abraham's Faith and Hope

**Hebrews 11:8-16** By faith Abraham . . . obeyed the calling of God to go out, **not knowing** where. Abraham had no knowledge of what was ahead. All he had was God's command and promise (**Genesis 12:1-3**). It was either to obey God in faith or to disobey. He trusted God. **He sojourned**—dwelt temporarily—in Canaan—as **in a strange country**. It was not home to Abraham. He lived in **tabernacles**—temporary dwellings—to the end of his life. Why? Because he believed that God's promise reached farther than the land of Canaan. He **looked for a city . . . whose builder and maker is God**—the Kingdom of God both on earth and in Heaven. His spiritual vision let him see that Canaan, while it was literally given to Abraham's family, was also a type of a greater, spiritual possession. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob held their faith through their journey here. By faith they saw, were **persuaded** of, and **embraced** the promises. By claiming to be **strangers and pilgrims** here, they showed their desire for the **heavenly** country. They never got to see or inherit that country, but we have found it, and are a part of it, thank God. That **city which hath foundations** is based on sure, true, good, and eternal footing (**Ephesians 2:19-20**).

The Church of God is the city that Abraham saw by faith. Its builder is God. Jesus said . . . **I will build my church** (**Matthew 16:18**). It is a heavenly country that is existing on earth for a time (**Ephesians 3:15**).

### The Church on Earth

Among the questions that enter our thoughts is why opposition, trials, and persecution are the lot of the Church of God. To answer this question, we must remember that this is a corrupted world. It is no longer good as God created it. This places the church in the middle of **the whole world that lieth in wickedness** (**1 John 5:19**).

**1 Peter 2:9-11** The Church of God on the earth is traveling to Heaven. God's people are **a chosen generation**. His people are of one generation and are holy (**Ephesians 1:4**). They are **a royal priesthood**. Jesus Christ **hath made us kings and priest unto God** (**Revelation 1:6**). As **kings**, saints reign over sin. As **priests**, they draw near to God and intercede in behalf of those in sin. The offering saints, or priests, bring to God is the living sacrifice of themselves (**Romans 12:1**) and the sacrifice of praise (**Hebrews 13:15**). **An holy nation**—separated unto God, cleansed from sin, righteous. **A peculiar people**—God's own private property, belonging to Him alone, responsible to Him only.

These terms describe the Church of God in the Gospel dispensation. Compare with the description of Israel, God's special people in the law dispensation (**Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 7:6**).

The purpose of people being transformed into this kind of people is to **show forth the praises of God** by word and by life. **In time past were not a people**—the Gentile nations were not accepted under the law but

now

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the Gospel is for all people. The people of God are different and separate from the people of the world. They have come **out of darkness into his marvelous light**. We must **abstain from fleshly lusts**. We cannot be at home in both the world and in Heaven. The interest and attention of a true saint of God are set upon Heavenly objects, not upon selfish pleasures or worldly possessions. He uses earthly things only as temporary tools to serve Jesus on his journey through this country to Heaven.

### The Saints' Program

**1 John 2:15-17** Love not the world because it and its **lust** pass away and leave one empty, without value or hope. **He that doeth the will of God abideth forever**—has eternal life. He builds in eternal things. No one can love the world and love the Father also. There are two ways open: to love the world or to do the will of God. Which will we choose? Build for eternity, not for this world.

One cannot have a vision of the kingdom simply by desiring it. One cannot be a stranger and pilgrim on the earth just by calling himself one. One is not a foreigner to the world unless he is a citizen **of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19)**. One becomes a citizen of Heaven by taking Christ who is the way to the Father (**John 14:6**). Only the Spirit of God can take love of the world out of our hearts and fill us with love for God and Heaven. Abraham was a stranger and pilgrim on the earth. He saw by faith the establishment of God's kingdom on earth and in Heaven. Why can't we?

### JUST A THOUGHT

**"It is better to look ahead and prepare  
than to look back and regret."**

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