

Encampments refer to temporary places where people set up their dwellings for a specific purpose, often related to military or strategic needs.

For example, in ancient times, when people went to war, they would set up camps or temporary shelters at designated locations. These camps were called encampments.

Take a look at Judges 10:17-18:

“Then the people of Ammon gathered together and encamped in Gilead, and the people of Israel gathered and encamped at Mizpah. And the leaders of Gilead said to one another, ‘Who shall lead the fight against the people of Ammon? Who shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead?’” (ESV)

This passage shows how both armies set up their encampments strategically, preparing for battle. These were temporary military settlements established for the purpose of warfare.

Similarly, when the Israelites journeyed toward the Promised Land, they also set up temporary dwellings or encampments along the way.

In Exodus 29:13-14, we read about a ritual act that took place in relation to an encampment:

“You shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, the caul above the liver, and the two kidneys with their fat, and burn them on the altar. But the bull’s hide and its flesh and its dung you shall burn with fire outside the camp. It is a sin offering.” (ESV)

Here, the phrase “outside the camp” (or “encampment”) refers to the temporary settlement where the Israelites dwelled. Certain ritual activities were conducted outside these encampments to maintain holiness within the camp.

The concept of encampments also appears in other Scripture passages such as Exodus 36:6, Leviticus 4:21; 10:5, and Judges 21:12, each referring to temporary dwellings or designated places

of living.

What Can We Learn from the Concept of Encampments?

1. We Are Temporary Residents on Earth

Just like the Israelites lived in encampments, we too are sojourners on this earth. Our stay here is temporary and purposeful. The Bible reminds us repeatedly that this world is not our permanent home.

2. Our Hearts Should Be Set on the Eternal, Not the Temporary

Abraham understood this reality well. Despite his great wealth and possessions, his heart was not set on earthly things but on the promises of God and the eternal city to come.

The writer of Hebrews explains Abraham’s mindset beautifully:

“By faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.”
(*Hebrews 11:9-10, ESV*)

Abraham lived as a pilgrim and a stranger on earth, setting his hope and trust on God’s eternal kingdom.

3. Living as Pilgrims in This World

Just as Abraham, we are called to live as pilgrims and strangers here, looking beyond this present life to the future glory that awaits us. The temporary nature of our earthly “encampment” should motivate us to live faithfully and with an eternal perspective.

The same chapter in Hebrews continues:

“People who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.” (*Hebrews 11:14-16, ESV*)

4. The Example of Job: Faith Amidst Loss

Job’s story is a powerful example of steadfast faith. Despite losing all his possessions and children, Job did not waver in his trust in God. Because of his unwavering faith, God ultimately blessed him beyond measure.

This teaches us that living as temporary residents with firm faith brings God’s blessings and favor—even when circumstances are difficult.

Reflection: Are We Like Abraham and Job?

- Do we live as pilgrims and sojourners, with our hearts set on God’s eternal kingdom, or are we too attached to our earthly “encampments”?
- Can we remain faithful in trials, trusting God like Job did?
- Are we seeking a heavenly homeland, or are we distracted by the temporary comforts of this world?

Conclusion

Just as the Israelites set up encampments during their journey and battles, so we too are temporary residents in this world. Our true home is not here, but in the eternal presence of God.

Let us live with our hearts fixed on the heavenly city, setting our hope fully on the promises of God. By doing so, we will receive both the peace of God here and the eternal reward He has prepared for those who faithfully follow Him.

Shalom

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