

## **Hebrews 11**

### **Jesus Provides Superior Blessings**

- **Key Verse: Hebrews 11:40 - “God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.”**
- **It’s an understatement to say the Bible speaks often of the necessity and benefits of “faith” in the life of a disciple of Christ and follower of God. Great men and women of the Word of God demonstrated great faith and trust in the face of harrowing situations of life. Whether David before Goliath, Daniel in the lion’s den, or Abraham with the unenviable task of offering his own son as a sacrifice on an altar, these faithful followers found the help, strength and peace of God when they trusted in Him above all else. He blessed them with forgiveness and numerous other blessings. But in spite of all He did for them, He has provided some “better” for us. The spiritual blessings we have in Christ are far superior to any blessings the Old Covenant saints received (Ephesians 1:3ff).**
- **May reading and studying about the faith of these dedicated, albeit very human and imperfect people of God, work to enhance, encourage and exhort us to a closer walk with our Father.**

**Questions for study and discussion: (The verses in parenthesis will help you with a starting point for your study)**

#### **1. How is faith defined in our text?**

- **Verse 1: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”**
- **This is an inspired definition of faith. "Faith" is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.**
- **Faith is complete trust, confidence, or reliance.**

- We would say that faith is being sure concerning things hoped for, and having a conviction concerning things not seen.

## **2. *How were the worlds framed? How do we know such? (3)***

**Verse 3: *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear –***

- The creation of the world is among the things "not seen" and all of our knowledge of it rests on faith that comes from the word of God (Rom. 10:17). It is "through faith" that we understand that God spoke the world into existence. By His word, the world was brought into existence out of nothing.
- Heb. 1:2 - The worlds were made by Christ. (See also John 1:1-14; Col. 1:16; Eph. 3:9.)
- "Word" is not from "Logos" as in John 1:1, but from the word that is used in Matthew 4:4 and means the spoken word.
- Gen. 1:3 - God said, "Let there be light and there was light."
- Psalm 33:6-9 - God commanded and it was done.

## **3. *What kind of sacrifice did Abel offer? What impact does his life continue to have? (4)***

**Verse 4: *By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks***

- *Some see significance in the fact that Adam and Eve were passed over. They were not regarded as heroes of the faith. The first example that the writer gives is that of Abel.*
- *Abel offered the sacrifice that God said to offer, while Cain refused to offer what God commanded or else he offered it with the wrong attitude or perhaps both reasons. We don't know exactly how God testified of His gift, but now God testifies that Abel's gift rendered him righteous through the word in the book of Hebrews.*
- *Abel's influence lives on. His example still says trust, work and worship God as deserves and demands.*
  - *Gen. 4:1-5 - These verses give the account of the offerings of Cain and Abel.*

- *That God told them what to offer is obvious from the following:*
  - *Heb. 11:4 - Abel offered by faith,*
  - *Rom. 10:17 - Faith comes from hearing the word of God.*
  - *Rom. 2:11 - If God told Abel, He also told Cain.*
- *1 John 3:12 - This verse tells us exactly why Cain killed Abel.*

#### **4. *What happened to Enoch and what is his testimony? (5)***

**Verse 5: *By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, and was not found, because God had taken him; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God***

- **In Genesis 5:22-24, we see that Enoch pleased God by walking with Him. Jude 1:14 says Enoch also prophesied about the coming of the Lord. Where Jude got his information we are not told, but we do know he received it from inspiration.**
  - **Hebrews 11:5 is a commentary on Genesis 5:24.**
  - **1 Kings 2:11 - Elijah and Enoch evidently went to heaven or paradise which is where all saints go at death (Phil. 1:21-23).**

#### **5. *What must be true of the man who comes to God? (6)***

**Verse 6: *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him***

- ***This proves that man must believe before he responds and that God rewards those who diligently seek Him.***
- ***Psalm 19:1ff - The heavens declare the glory and thus the existence of God.***
- ***Rom. 1:20 - The power and wisdom of God is seen in things created. There is no excuse for not believing in a Divine Creator.***
- ***We can see that there is power and design in the establishment of the world.***
- ***Illustration: If we go on an island and see a house, we would immediately know, because of the design, that a person with intelligence has been there. We would not believe for a minute that a storm came through and built the house.***

- *Heb. 3:4 - Every house is built by some man, but He that created all things is God.*

## **6. What is said concerning the faith of Noah (7)**

- Verse 7: *By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith*
- Noah's faith caused him to be sure of things "not yet seen." He believed so strongly that he spent one hundred and twenty years or so building an ark. Faith makes the unseen real.
  - Gen. 6-9 - These chapters give the account of the flood.
  - Gen. 6:12, 13 - Some say a cubit was eighteen inches. Others say about twenty-two inches.
    - Allowing eighteen inches for a cubit, the ark was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high with three stories.
    - It was very large with as much shipping space as a freight train with over 500 boxcars.
    - The animals did not have to be full-grown when taken into ark. Dinosaurs and elephants could have been very young and small.
  - Gen. 7:11-12 - Water came from two sources. Water gushed up from the ground as well as the rain from above.
  - Gen. 2:5-6 – These verses may indicate that it might not have ever rained before the flood according to some, but we don't really know.
  - Gen. 7:2 - He was to take seven pairs of clean animals and one pair of unclean.
    - There were fourteen clean animals and two each of the unclean.
    - Here we see a distinction between clean and unclean animals long before the Law of Moses was given.
  - Gen. 8:20 - As soon as he came out of the ark Noah offered clean animals as a sacrifice which was one reason for taking them in by sevens.
    - The clean and unclean must refer to those that were to be used for sacrifices and those that were not.

- Gen. 9:3 - This verse indicates that Noah could eat all of the animals both clean and unclean. So clean and unclean probably did not refer to eating, but to ones that were used as sacrifices and those that were not used.
- Gen. 11:7 – This verse is evidence for a universal flood!
  - If local, why build an ark?
  - Why build it so big?
  - Why take birds into the ark if it was just a local one? (Genesis 7:3)
  - How could a local flood be kept in the same area for over one year without a miracle? Noah entered the ark for seven days and then in Noah's 600th year, 2nd month, 17th day, the flood started (Gen. 7:4, 11). In the 601st year, 2nd month, 27th day of month, Noah left the ark (Gen. 7:13). Therefore, they were in the ark one year and ten days, plus the seven days before the flood started, making a total of one year and seventeen days in the ark. One year and ten days after the rain started, the earth was dry.
  - Gen. 7:19 - All the hills were covered and water rose fifteen cubits above the highest mountain which was twenty to thirty feet above the mountains.
  - If the flood was local, the Rainbow Covenant has been broken many times, for there have been many local floods (Gen. 9:11-16).
  - 2 Pet. 3:3-7 - Since the second destruction of the earth will be universal, so was the flood.
  - Matt. 24:37-39 - Jesus believed in Noah, the ark, and the flood that “took them all away.”
- 2 Pet. 3:5-6 - So I believe in a universal flood and that the “world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.”

## ***7. For what city was Abraham looking? (9-10)***

- Verse 9: ***By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise***
  - ***Abraham was a sojourner in the land. It appears from this that Abraham never regarded Canaan as his home. Neither he, nor Isaac,***

*nor Jacob ever built a permanent residence in this country. They were satisfied to live in movable tents. Isaac and Jacob were heirs of the same promise. By faith they all knew that God would indeed one day fulfill His promise to them literally.*

- **Verse 10: *for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God***
  - *Abraham, with an eye of faith, was not considering the land of Canaan his home, as it was, but the antitype of Canaan or heaven. Abraham expected the possession of the Promised Land for himself and his descendants and his faith looked beyond this to the heavenly abode of the righteous. By faith he was convinced of things not seen by him at the time concerning the eternal promised land.*

## **8. *What is true of all those mentioned in verses 1-12? (13) What is it they desire? (16)***

Verse 13: ***These all died in faith***

- "These all" may not refer to all those that have been mentioned even though all those mentioned from Abel to Sarah did die (or in Enoch's case was translated) in faith. But some think this particular statement was made concerning those who had received the promise who were Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah.
  - Abel, Enoch, and Noah will receive the benefits of the promise of salvation in Christ as well as access to the heavenly country even though they may have never specifically heard it.
  - Hebrews 11:5 - Enoch did not die.
- ***not having received the promises***
  - That is, not having received the fulfillment of the promises.
- Hebrews 11:17 - Abraham had received the promises, but not the fulfillment of them.
  - He never saw his descendants in such large numbers.
  - He never saw his seed received inheritance in Canaan.
  - He never saw the earth blessed through his seed.

- He would personally receive the blessing of the things promised at the proper time, but he did not receive them during his lifetime on earth.
- *but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them*
  - They really believed they would be fulfilled, though they did not see them fulfilled. They had conviction of things not seen.
- *and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth*
  - By their actions they confessed that they were strangers here. They were not looking for earthly possessions themselves because they dwelt in tents and never had a permanent dwelling place on earth.

Verse 16: *But now they desire a country, that is, a heavenly country*

- They desired a country in heaven.
  - Hebrews 11:10 - He looked for the city, a heavenly city.
  - He looked for a country better than Canaan or Ur of the Chaldeans and better than any earthly country.
  - Likely God gave the Patriarchs information about the heavenly country far beyond what is recorded in Genesis.
  - Jude 1:14-15 - There were many things prophesied in the Old Testament that are not actually recorded there such as this prophecy of Enoch.
- *Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God*
  - God was proud of these Old Testament saints.
  - Ex. 3:6 - He said He was their God.
  - Matt. 22:23-32 - He is the God of the living.
  - Job 1:8 - God was proud of Job and said there was none like him.
- *for He has prepared a city for them*
  - This probably refers to the same place as John 14:1-2 and other references to heaven.
  - 1 Pet. 1:3-5 - Heaven is the inheritance of the saints.
  - Isa. 65:17ff; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21-22 - Heaven is ultimately the “new heaven and new earth” promised to all saints both in the Old Testament and the New.

- Matt. 25:34 - The kingdom that we will ultimately inherit is the one prepared in the mind of God from the foundation of the world.
- Rev. 13:8 - Christ was slain in the mind of God from the foundation of the world.

## **9. What was it that Abraham had concluded before offering up Isaac? (17-19)**

**Verse 17: *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son***

- This is recorded in Genesis 22:1-13.
  - "Tested" means put to the test or proved.
  - Genesis 16:16 - Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice.
  - Genesis 21:12 - In Isaac shall the seed be called.
  - Abraham offered up his only begotten son through whom the promises were to be fulfilled.
  - It was through Isaac, that Abraham was going to be a great nation and be given the land of Canaan.
  - It was through the descendants of Isaac, that Christ was going to come and bless all nations and now Abraham is told to kill him.
- Verse 18: ***of whom it was said, In Isaac your seed shall be called***
  - How old was Isaac at this time? Adam Clark says he was 33. Josephus said he was 25. Others believe 36. Josephus or Adam Clark could be right. The common Sunday School card presentation of Isaac as a beautiful little boy is probably not right. But really we don't know how old he was, but I would believe he was likely twenty or older. The footnote in the NKJV and the ESV both render it "young man."
- Verse 19: ***concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead***
  - According to Genesis 22:5, Abraham expected he and Isaac to come back from the sacrifice.
- ***from which he also received him in a figurative sense*** - He received him back from the altar as one raised from the dead. As far as Abraham was concerned,

he was dead because he really intended to kill him and had killed him in his own mind. Therefore he was *figuratively* raised from the dead.

### **10. What life did Moses choose when he became of age? (24-26) Why? (26)**

- **Verses 24-26 - *By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.* –**
  - **Because of his faith Moses knew what to refuse and what to choose in order to win and not lose. He chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than the affluence in Egypt. He knew sin's pleasure would soon pass. And he knew that his God would reward faithfulness. These verses tell us about the *riches he refused*; the *reproach he received*; and the *reward he respected*.**
  - **Deut. 34:5-7 - Moses lived 120 years. His life can be divided into three periods of forty years each. He spent forty years in Egypt learning how to be a leader. He spent forty years in the wilderness learning how to survive in the wilderness. Then he spent forty years leading the children of Israel in the wilderness.**
  - **Matt. 17:1-5; Lk. 9:31 - He was with Elijah and Jesus on the mountain when the appearance of Jesus changed. They were talking about the death of Jesus for sin.**
  - **1 Cor. 3:8-9; Rev. 14:13 - Moses looked to the reward and so should we. Our "works" follow us in death because we will be rewarded for them.**
  - **Matt. 10:40-42 - Jesus notices and rewards us for giving as little as a cup of cold water to the needy because of our faith in Him.**

### **11. What great miracle is discussed in verse 29? How was faith involved here?**

- **Verse 29: *By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned***

- This is the Israelites leaving Egypt. When Pharaoh and his army attempted to cross they drowned (Exodus 14:5-9; 15-16; 19-23; 26-28).
- Ex. 14:30 - God saved Israel that day.
- 1 Cor. 10:1-2 - They were baptized into Moses. Baptism stood as the dividing line between slavery and freedom.
- 1 Cor. 10:11 - This is surely a type of our salvation in Christ. These are our examples.
- Exodus 14:21 - We might not notice that strong winds were involved in parting the sea. The Holy Spirit is compared to wind in the new birth and some do not notice His roll (Jn. 3:8).

## **12. *Name the other characters of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11:30-38.***

Verse 30: ***By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days*** - Jericho was the first city conquered by Israel in the land of Canaan (Josh. 6:1-5, 20).

- Josh. 6:3 - The Israelites were to go around the walls once a day for six days.
- Josh. 6:4 - On the seventh day, they were to go around seven times which totals thirteen times during the seven days.

Verse 31: ***By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace*** - Rahab was a harlot who hid the two spies Joshua sent to spy out Jericho (Joshua 2:1-4).

- Josh. 2:8-19 - She was told what to do and she did it. He does not commend all that she did but He does commend and reward her faith (Joshua 6:22-23).
- Jam. 2:25 - She was justified by her faith because her works demonstrated that she believed in the God of Israel.
- Matt. 1:5 - Rahab was the mother of Boaz and Boaz was the father of Obed and Obed was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David.
  - Matt. 1:5 - She was David's great-great grandmother.
  - Matt. 1:1-5 - She was one of four women listed in the genealogy of Christ.
- Heb. 11:30 - ***She did not perish with them that believed not***. This shows why the Canaanites were destroyed.

- Heb. 11:40 - Rahab is in “Faith’s Hall of Fame”. She went from the “house of shame to the hall of fame” because of her faith in things she had “not seen.”

Verse 32: *And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon* - Gideon was the fifth judge of Israel (Judges 6:11-8:35).

- Judges 6-7 - He won a battle against his enemies with three hundred men.
- Judges 6:36-40 - He wanted a fleece of wool to have dew on it but he wanted the ground dry. The next day he, “*squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water*” (6:38). Then he wanted the ground wet and fleece dry and it was.

*and Barak* - Barak was a leader in Israel during the time of Deborah who was the fourth Judge. He led Israel to a victory over the king of Canaan and a man named Sisera. Sisera is the one who had a nail driven through his temples (Judges 4:6-5:12).

*and Samson* - The thirteenth Judge of Israel (Judges 13:24-16:31). He battled the Philistines, but mostly remembered for his love for Delilah (Judges 16:4-30).

*and Jephthah* - He was the ninth Judge of Israel (Judges 11:1-12:7). He defeated the children of Ammon and made a foolish vow that if God would deliver them to him, he would offer whatever came out of his house as a burnt offering on his return. His daughter came out to meet him and he did to her according to his vow (Judges 11:30-40). Some do not think that he actually killed her but it seems to me that he likely did although I’m not sure.

*also of David* - He was the second king of Israel. The account of his life is given primarily in first and second Samuel.

- 1 Sam. 16 - Samuel anoints David. His death is recorded in 1 Kings 2:10-11.
- 1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22 - He was a man after God’s own heart.

*and Samuel* - He was the fifteenth and last judge. All Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord, even when he was a boy. (1 Sam. 3:20).

***and the prophets*** – This could be all those in the Old Testament such as Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, etc.

Verse 33: ***who through faith*** - The writer does not mean that all the ones he is about to mention did all the things mentioned, but that some of them did some of the things while others did the others.

***subdued kingdoms*** - This would include David who defeated the Syrians, Edomites, Ammonites, etc. (2 Sam.). Jephthah defeated the Ammonites (Judges 11). Samson defeated the Philistines (Judges 13-16).

***worked righteousness*** - Many of those just mentioned did what was right on various occasions.

***obtained promises*** - "Obtained promises" could mean they obtained verbal promises as Abraham did (Genesis 22:18), or it could mean that they obtained the blessings of the things promised such as victories and other blessings.

***stopped mouths of lions*** - Daniel is probably the one the writer had in mind (Dan. 6). His faith stopped the mouths of lions because God had shut the lion's mouths (Dan. 6:8 & 22).

Verse 34: ***quenched the violence of fire*** - During the time of Nebuchadnezzar, three Hebrew children were thrown in the fire because they wouldn't bow down to the image Nebuchadnezzar had made (Dan. 3).

***escaped edge of sword*** - David escaped Goliath's sword (1 Sam. 17:44-51). David escaped Saul's spear more than once (1 Sam. 18:11; 19:10-12). Elisha escaped the sword of the Syrians by striking them blind (2 Kings 6:18).

***out of weakness were made strong*** - Samson could head this list (Judges 16). Hezekiah was made strong after his illness (Isa. 38:1-8).

***became valiant in battle, turned to fight the armies of the aliens*** - The books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings supply instances of this in abundance.

Verse 35: ***Women received their dead raised to life again*** - The widow of Zarephath's son was raised from the dead by Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:9-24). The Shunammite woman's son was raised by the faith of Elisha (2 Kgs. 4:32-37).

***Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance*** - They did not accept deliverance even if/when offered them on condition that they renounce their faith. These had just as much faith as those who were triumphant but they were tortured. The idea that faith will make everything go well is clearly refuted by these and many other examples such as Jesus, Paul, and these Hebrew believers as we have already learned (Heb. 10:32-34).

***that they might obtain a better resurrection*** - The better resurrection is the resurrection at the last day. All will be raised but the faithful will have it far better than unbelievers.

Verse 36: ***Still others had trials of mockings*** - In Judges 16:25 the Philistines mocked Samson. Job was mocked in Job 19:13-19. Elisha was mocked by some young people in 2 Kings 2:23-24.

***and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment*** - Joseph, Samson, Micah and numerous others are examples of this mistreatment.

Verse 37: ***They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented*** - Some believe Isaiah was sawn in two. Numerous others who had faith suffered temptation and affliction.

Verse 38: ***of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth*** - The wicked world did not deserve these good examples of faith in these men and women of faith.

### ***13. What is true of all of these faithful followers of God (39-40).***

Verse 39: ***And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise*** - All of these obtained a good report because of their faith. But during their lifetime they did not receive the fulfillment of the promise of God

to bless all nations by the seed of Abraham. Jesus did not come during their lifetime as He has in ours.

Verse 40: ***God having provided something better for us***, - The better thing that God has provided for us is the new and better covenant with new and better promises (Heb. 8:6). This includes all the superior blessings that Jesus provides for us. We have received the fulfillment of the promises of Christ who has provided for us a new and living way into the presence of God.

- Gal 3:26-29 - We belong to Christ and are heirs of the promise God made to Abraham.
- They were not in Christ. They did not belong to Christ because He had not come when they lived. They had no absolute forgiveness of sins and they did not have the blessing we have in Christ.

***that they should not be made perfect apart from us*** – Neither their faith nor their absolute forgiveness would be complete without us and the promise that has been fulfilled to us in Christ. They are redeemed or made perfect because of the work of Jesus Christ. But without the work He has done for and to us, they would not be forgiven and blessed as they were then and are now.

### ***“Digging Deeper for Better Things”***

**RESEARCH QUESTION:** Go back to Genesis 5 and list some of the remarkable qualities of the man named Enoch.

- Walked with God 300 years
- No doubt did that before his sons and daughters
- Had tremendous Faith in God
- Didn't let all the excuses we use to derail our walk with God derail his
- Didn't say “I don't think I can hold out”. He held out for 300 years!

**THOUGHT QUESTION:** How do you **THINK** it possible for Hebrews 11:17 to be true, knowing that Abraham did not actually “offer” Isaac in Genesis 22?

- Verse 19: ***concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead***
  - According to Genesis 22:5, Abraham expected he and Isaac to come back from the sacrifice.

- ***from which he also received him in a figurative sense*** - He received him back from the altar as one raised from the dead. As far as Abraham was concerned, he was dead because he really intended to kill him and had killed him in his own mind. Therefore he was *figuratively* raised from the dead.

## ***A Message of “Better Things” from Hebrews 11***

- What a great story of forgiveness we read about here in Hebrews 11. Rahab finds her way into *“Faith’s Hall of Fame”*. She went from the *“house of shame to the hall of fame”* because of her faith in things she had *“not seen.”*
  - Rahab was a harlot who hid the two spies Joshua sent to spy out Jericho (Joshua 2:1-4).
  - Josh. 2:8-19 - She was told what to do and she did it. He does not commend all that she did but He does commend and reward her faith (Joshua 6:22-23).
  - James 2:25 - She was justified by her faith because her works demonstrated that she believed in the God of Israel.
  - Matt. 1:5 - Rahab was the mother of Boaz and Boaz was the father of Obed and Obed was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David.
    - Matt. 1:5 - She was David’s great-great grandmother.
    - Matt. 1:1-5 - She was one of four women listed in the genealogy of Christ.
  - Heb. 11:30 - She did not perish with them that believed not. This shows why the Canaanites were destroyed.