

Hebrews Chapter 11

Verses 1-40: The 11th chapter is a moving account of faithful Old Testament saints and given such titles as, “The Saints’ Hall of Fame,” “The Honor Roll of Old Testament Saints,” and “Heroes of Faith.” They all attest to the value of living by faith. They compose the “cloud of witnesses” (12:1), who give powerful testimony to the Hebrews that they should come to faith in God’s truth in Christ.

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

This verse is written in a style of Hebrew poetry (used often in the Psalms), in which two parallel and nearly identical phrases are used to state the same thing (1 Peter 1:7); God tests our faith in the crucible.

“Substance”: Or assurance which is from the same Greek word translated “exact representation” (in 1:3), and “assurance” (in 3:14). The faith described here involves the most solid possible conviction, the God given present assurance of a future reality.

“Evidence of things not seen”: True faith is not based on empirical evidence but on divine assurance, and is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8).

(Verse 1), is not so much a definition of what faith is, as it is a description of what faith does (11:6). Two truths concerning its activity are stated here. First, faith provides “substance” (Greek hypostasis).

Though broad in its usages, this Greek word normally has the meaning of “assurance” in the New Testament (3:14; 2 Cor. 9:14; 11:17), and this seems to be the best sense here. Second, faith provides “evidence” (Greek elegchos). It is evidence in the sense of proof that results in conviction.

The difference between assurance and evidence would be minimal were it not for the phrase qualifying each; “of things hoped for” and “of things not seen”. The first involves future hope; the second involves present realities that are unseen.

The first includes the hope of the resurrection, the return of Christ, and the glorification of the saints. The second involves unseen realities, such as the forgiveness of sin through Christ’s sacrifice and the present intercession of Christ in heaven. Hope is faith relating to the future; conviction is faith relating to the present.

This verse is a lesson in itself. How many times have you been asked what faith is? Probably you turned to this verse and read it to the one asking the question. Faith, is a knowing, when all the facts are against you. Faith is the opposite of fear. Faith is assurance. A substance is something you could see with your eye or hold in your hand.

Notice the substance is not the faith, the substance is the hoped for. Then this is saying, belief in something that you will be able to see later. Evidence is an indication or a sign. This evidence is of something not seen, how can this be? It can be because God said it. Anything you can see takes no faith to believe.

Then what is this faith? This is believing that what God promised, He will do. Jesus told Thomas, blessed are those who did not see but believed.

John 20:29 "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed [are] they that have not seen, and [yet] have believed."

Romans 8:24-25 "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" "But if we hope for that we see not, [then] do we with patience wait for [it]."

You see, faith in our heart in Jesus Christ is what saves us (read Romans 10:9-10). Abraham believed and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Hebrews 11:2 "For by it the elders obtained a good report."

“The elders”: In this context, the term refers to all saints, both men and women, under the older covenant, a select few of whom are described (in verses 4-40).

“Obtained a good report”: Literally “were testified to” or “had witness given about them” (verses 4, 39). God bears witness on the behalf of these saints that they lived by faith and divine approval is granted to them.

We will find that many of the elders who obtained a good report were not perfect men, they were believers. Their great faith in God made them right in His sight.

Hebrews 11:3 "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."

“Through faith”: Each example of faith (in verses 3-31), is formally introduced with this specific phrase. True saving faith works in obedience to God.

“We”: This refers to the writer and all other true believers, present and past.

“Worlds”: The physical universe itself, as well as its operation and administration.

“Were framed”: The concept involved in the verb (used also in 13:21), is that of equipping so that something might be made ready to fulfill its purpose.

“Word of God”: God’s divine utterance (see, e.g. Gen. 1:3, 9, 11, 14).

“Not made”: God created the universe out of something which cannot be seen. There is the possibility that the invisible something was God’s own energy or power.

The very first Scripture in the Bible tells us how the earth came to be.

Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

This one statement kills so many of the theories that man has about who or what to worship. This destroys the teaching of ultimately becoming. It also kills the theory that we should worship things of nature, because the Creator is always greater than the thing He creates. God actually spoke the worlds into existence from nothing. The Word of God created.

John 1:1-3 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "The same was in the beginning with God." "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

We will give one more Scripture on this for another witness to the fact, God made the world.

Acts 17:24 "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;"

Verses 4-40: Adam and Eve are passed over in this portion regarding creation because they had seen God, fellowshiped with Him, and talked with Him. Their children were the first to exercise faith in the unseen God.

Hebrews 11:4 "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

“Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain”: In what way was his sacrifice better? Was it because his was animal and Cain’s vegetable? Or his firstling and Cain’s not the first fruit? Or his with blood and Cain’s without? Both Hebrews and Genesis (4:1-15), demonstrate that it was not the offering that made one acceptable and the other unacceptable.

“Better”: The precise reason for the superiority of Abel’s sacrifice is not specifically revealed by the writer of Hebrews, but implied (in 12:24; see notes there). Here his concern is with Abel’s faith. Both brothers knew what God required. Abel obeyed and Cain did not. Abel acted in faith, Cain in unbelief.

Through faith, Abel left testimony to all succeeding generations that a person comes to God by faith to receive righteousness.

“Righteous”: Because of his faith, evidenced in obedience to God’s requirement for sacrifice, Abel was accounted as righteous by God (Rom. 4:4-8). Christ Himself referred to the

righteousness of Abel (Matt. 23:35). Cain's sacrifice was evidence that he was just going through the motions of ritual in a disobedient manner, not evidencing authentic faith.

Without faith, no one can receive imputed righteousness (Gen. 15:6).

“Testifying of his gifts”: Abel's offering proved something about his faith that was not demonstrated by Cain's offering.

God accepts both grain and animal offerings according to their purposes. The character of the worshiper made one offering acceptable and the other not. Abel offered his “by faith”; Cain obviously did not. Genesis records that even before the rejection of Cain's offering his heart was not right with God (Gen. 4:7).

With this verse, we begin examples of those, who found favor in God's sight, by faith. Cain and Abel were the 2 sons of Adam and Eve. In the following verses, we will see the reason Abel was found righteous.

Genesis 4:3-5 "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD." "And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:" "But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell."

We could read on and find that Cain killed Abel. The part of this that has to do with this, however, is the fact, that Abel's offering was an offering acceptable to God.

Genesis 4:10 "And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground."

Hebrews 11:5 "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

The quote is (from Gen. 5:24).

“Enoch”: The LXX translated the Hebrew idiom “Enoch walked with God” with “he pleased God.” The writer combines both in the reference. Enoch was miraculously taken to heaven without dying (1 Thess. 4:17).

The next three Scriptures will give a little more on this. It really seems that while Enoch was out walking with God one day, God just took him on home with Him.

Genesis 5:22-24 "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:" "And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:" "And Enoch walked with God: and he [was] not; for God took him."

Notice the number of years that Enoch lived is the same number of days as a year on our calendar. This catching away of Enoch is pretty much the same as the catching away of the Christians that are alive when the Lord comes back to get us.

Hebrews 11:6 "But without faith [it is] impossible to please [him]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and [that] he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

“Impossible to please” Enoch pleased God because he had faith. Without such faith, it is not possible for anyone to “walk with God” or “please Him” (10:38).

“He is”: The emphasis here is on “He,” the true God. Genuine faith does not simply believe that a divine being exists, but that the God of Scripture is the only real and true God who exists. Not believing that God exists is equivalent to calling Him a liar (1 John 5:10).

“Rewarder”: A person must believe not only that the true God exists, but also that He will reward men’s faith in Him with forgiveness and righteousness, because He has promised to do so (10:35; Gen. 15:1; Deut. 4:29; 1 Chron. 28:9; Psalm 58:11; Isa. 40:10).

This may be one of the most important statements in the Bible. If you do not believe in Jesus, then how could He be your Savior? There are so many Scriptures that explain how important it is for us to earnestly seek God. He is available to those who will accept Him. He will not force Himself on you; you must accept Him of your own free will.

Matthew 7:7 "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:"

This Scripture explained it so well. Salvation through Jesus Christ is a free gift. The only way to have any gift is to reach out and take it. Salvation must be received.

John 3:18 "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Let us look at one or two more Scriptures showing that belief in Jesus Christ is the only way we can make it to heaven.

Romans 10:14 "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

You can easily see from this that you cannot even pray if you do not believe in Jesus. The only prayer that makes it through to heaven is the prayer you pray in the name of Jesus. How can you pray in a name you do not believe in? You see the futility of this.

We find the way to heaven is in the same name that we must pray in. The next Scripture is Jesus speaking, because it is in red in the Bible.

John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Hebrews 11:7 "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

"Noah" (see Gen. 5:28 – 9:29; Ezek. 1:14.)

"Things not yet seen" (see notes on verses 1, 6). The world had not seen anything resembling the great Flood (not even rain), yet Noah spent 120 years (Gen. 6:3), fulfilling God's command to build the massive ark (Gen. 6:13-22).

Noah was asked by God to do in faith things that were incongruous with his former experience. He had never seen rain (Gen. 2:5), and yet God told him to build an ark because of a coming flood (Gen 6:13-17).

"With fear": Noah treated God's message with great respect and awe (5:7). His faith was expressed in obedience (Gen. 6:22; 7:5).

"Condemned": Noah warned the people of his time about God's impending judgment (1 Pet. 3:20), and is called "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5).

"Heir of the righteousness" (see notes on 6:12; 9:15). He who was a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5), also became an heir of righteousness. He believed the message he preached. Like Enoch before him (see notes on verse 5), Noah walked with God in faith and obedience (Gen. 6:9).

The important thing about the great flood that God warned Noah of is that it would be the first rain that had ever fallen on the earth. Noah, when warned by God of the impending flood, started building the ark.

We have a friend who sings a song, that says, it wasn't raining when Noah built the ark. What a foolish thing to do in the sight of the world. The neighbors probably thought that Noah had lost his mind.

How would this boat be of any earthly use without water to float it on? When we examine the Scriptures pertaining to this, we do not find that Noah's wife's faith or the faith of the three sons was mentioned.

It seems that they were saved because of Noah's great faith. One very important lesson to learn from this is that Noah was saved in the flood, not from the flood. It rained on Noah too. Noah's obedience to God saved his family and himself. God will not save us from tribulation either, He will save us in it. Notice also that the righteousness that Noah had, was faith in God.

I will give just a few Scriptures on this for your consideration.

Genesis 6:13 "And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth."

Genesis 6:22 "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he."

Genesis 7:1 "And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation."

Genesis 7:5 "And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him."

Genesis 7:23 "And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained [alive], and they that [were] with him in the ark."

There is a lesson for us in this. When we believe with all our heart in the Lord Jesus Christ and are obedient, even in the face of ridicule from our friends, He will save us. Our faith in Him will save us.

Hebrews Chapter 11 Questions

1. What is the faith chapter in the Bible?
2. Faith is the substance of what?
3. Faith is the evidence of what?
4. What is the opposite of faith?
5. What is evidence?
6. Who did Jesus tell Thomas would be blessed?
7. What a man seeth, why doth he yet ____ for.
8. Abraham _____ and it was counted unto him for righteousness.
9. How were the worlds framed?
10. What 2 false teachings are completely wiped out with (In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth)?
11. In what Scripture, do we find that the Word of God created all things?
12. God dwelleth not in _____ made with _____.

13. Which brother's gift was more acceptable to God; Cain or Abel?
14. Who were Cain and Abel?
15. What did Cain do to his brother Abel?
16. Who was translated that he did not see death?
17. What is an interesting thing about the number of years Enoch lived?
18. What does this catching away of Enoch remind us of?
19. He that cometh to God must believe that He ___ and that He is a rewarder of whom?
20. How can Jesus be your Savior if you do not believe in Him?
21. Ask and it shall be _____ .
22. Seek and ye shall _____.
23. Knock and it shall be _____ unto you.
24. He that believeth not is condemned, why?
25. How shall they call on Him in whom they have not _____?
26. What is the only way to get a prayer through to heaven?
27. What 3 things did Jesus call Himself in John 14:6?
28. How did Noah know to build an ark?
29. What made this building of the ark, seem so strange?
30. Who was saved with Noah?
31. Why were they saved?
32. Noah was saved ___ the flood, not _____ the flood.
33. It wasn't _____ when Noah built the ark.
34. What was destroyed by the flood?
35. What lesson can we learn from Noah?