

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS
A Study of Hebrews 11:1-40
By Pastor Marcus Bates

Introduction – Review

- The apostle Paul is believed to be the author of the epistle to the Hebrews (**GC 347, 411, 413, 420-421**).
- Timothy was a close ministry associate of Paul, and is mentioned by name in the epistle (**Heb. 13:23**), similar to other epistles written by Paul (**2 Cor. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:2; 1:18; 6:20-21; 2 Tim. 2:1; Philemon 1:1**).
- Produced prior to Jerusalem’s destruction in AD 70, this epistle was written to Jewish Christians, and might have also been used as an evangelistic tool to reach the Jewish people with the Gospel message.
- One of the central themes in the book of Hebrews is the “**Jesus is better than . . .**” theme.
- **Heb. 1:1-14** (Jesus is better than angels); **Heb. 2:1-18** (Jesus is better than any human being); **Heb. 3:1-19** (Jesus is better than Moses); **Heb. 4:1-16** (Jesus offers a better rest – salvation, Sabbath, and eternal life); **Heb. 5:1-14** (Jesus has a better priesthood – Melchisedec); **Heb. 6:1-20** (Jesus offers better promises); **Heb. 7:1-28** (Jesus is a better priest than the OT Melchisedec was); **Heb. 8:1-13** (Jesus ministers and serves in a better sanctuary); **Heb. 9:1-28** (Jesus ministers in a better sanctuary, and through His better sacrifice, He offers a better intercession); **Heb. 10:1-39** (Jesus offers a better sacrifice).

Hebrews 11 – Reflections on Hebrews 11:1-6

- Genuine faith is having confidence that what we hope for will happen.
- Genuine faith is also trusting in realities (evidence) that cannot be seen with the human eye.
- God cannot be seen visibly, but we trust in Him; our spiritual forefathers and mothers (the elders) had a good report, meaning that they were counted by God as faithful, and were an inspiration to others.
- We have faith in the fact that God created the universe through the power of His Word (**Psa. 33:6-9**); God was not dependent upon pre-existent matter; what was made was not dependent on what can be seen.
- Abel demonstrated faith by offering a sacrifice, trusting that his offering pointed forward to Christ’s sacrifice; God accepted his gift, and his testimony still speaks to God’s faith community; Enoch was translated to heaven without seeing death, as his life was one of faith and trust, which pleased God.
- Without genuine faith, we cannot please God; people who come to God must believe that He is real, and trust that He will reward those who diligently seek Him.

Hebrews 11 – Reflections on Hebrews 11:7-16

- Noah lived by faith, trusting that God would send a flood of water, despite the fact that it had never rained prior to the flood; he acted in faith by building an ark, and thus is one of the fathers of faith.
- Abraham also lived by faith, leaving home when God called him to leave, despite the fact that he didn’t know where God was sending him; he dwelt in tents as a nomad in the promised land, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were also spiritual and temporal heirs of the same promise.
- These faithful people didn’t look for an earthly city, but a heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, built by God.
- Sarah also lived by faith, trusting that God would enable her to conceive, despite the fact that she was beyond the age of child-bearing, and thus trusted that God was faithful to His promises.
- Abraham was also beyond the ability to produce children, and yet God gave him and Sarah a child, through which Abraham would have many sons, which would number as the stars in the sky.
- All of these people died having a strong faith in God, not having received the promise of seeing the Messiah, Jesus Christ. They only saw the promise from a distance, which was future to their day.
- The faithful embraced this promise, and accepted the reality that they were strangers in a foreign land as far as their earthly lives, and they looked forward to a better country, that is, the heavenly kingdom.
- This heavenly kingdom includes the New Jerusalem, a heavenly city that God has prepared for the faithful.

Hebrews 11 – Reflections on Hebrews 11:17-31

- Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice, trusting that God was able to resurrect him from the dead.
- Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau by faith; Jacob blessed Joseph's sons before he passed away.
- Joseph also lived by faith, trusting that his body would be returned to the promised land for final burial.
- Moses also lived by faith, refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; he also chose to suffer affliction, trusting that suffering reproach as a Hebrew would be better than enjoying Egyptian riches.
- Moses also fled from Egypt by faith, not fearing the wrath of Pharaoh; he saw Him who is invisible – he trusted in the unseen God to take care of him, which is the essence of genuine, authentic faith.
- Moses also kept the Passover in Egypt by faith during the Exodus, trusting that, through the sprinkling of the blood on the doorposts, God would save all of the firstborn children of Israel.
- Israel passed through the Red Sea and saw the walls of the city of Jericho collapse by faith.
- Rahab also lived by faith, having given assistance to the Israelite spies; these were OT champions of faith!

Hebrews 11 – Reflections on Hebrews 11:32-40

- Paul listed other faithful OT people – Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, and Samuel (and others).
- Through faith, these OT champions subdued kingdoms, lived righteous lives, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped death from the sword, were made strong despite their weaknesses, were brave in dangerous situations, and put enemy armies to flight.
- Through faith, women received their dead children raised to life again, while others were tortured, not accepting deliverance because they hoped for a better resurrection.
- Others were also mocked, scourged, imprisoned, stoned, sawn in half, tempted, slain with the sword, and experienced destitution, affliction, and torment; Paul asserted that the world was not worthy of these faithful sufferers, as they wandered in deserts, mountains, dens, and caves.
- They did not receive the promise of being able to see the Messiah, but they still were found faithful, trusting in God to sustain their lives; although they were not able to witness the Messiah, they still died in faith, and will be accounted as perfect with the faithful who lived after them.

Summary of Hebrews 11:1-40

- The essence of genuine faith is hoping for something that we believe will really happen, no matter how impossible it might seem to the order of the natural world from a human standpoint.
- Genuine faith also involves believing and trusting in Someone (God), Whom we cannot see.
- Many OT people in the Bible reflected this kind of faith in their lives; these people included Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, and Samuel, along with many others faithful followers of God during the OT period.
- Some of those described in this chapter had faith in impossible situations from a human vantage point.
- Noah built an ark, despite the fact that it had never rained on earth up to that point; Abraham and Sarah believed that God could give them a child of promise, despite the fact that Sarah was well-beyond child-bearing years; Abraham also offered Isaac, trusting that God could resurrect him from the dead; Moses believed that the firstborn of Egypt would be slain in homes with no Passover blood on the doorpost.
- Through the years, the faithful have endured many hardships because of their supreme trust in God; the OT faithful died in faith, not having seen the Messiah in person, but still trusting that the Messiah would come as God had promised; Paul encouraged Hebrew Christians that they have witnessed the coming of the Messiah in the Person of Jesus Christ, and they have been blessed.
- This message of faith speaks to us today; we should have supreme trust in God's promises!