

## A STUDY OF HEBREWS

### *By Faith (Part 1) - Chapter 11:1-16*

#### I. Review of Chapters 1-10

##### A. Jesus Christ is the greatest and final Prophet and enthroned Son of God.

1. Therefore we must pay closest attention to His Gospel... (1:1-2:18)

##### B. Jesus Christ is infinitely greater than Moses and gives eternal, not just temporal, rest.

1. Therefore we must persevere in faith lest we fall like those in the wilderness... (3:1-4:13)

##### C. Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest who sympathizes with us in our suffering and temptation.

1. Therefore we who have profound needs must fly to God's throne of grace... (4:14-5:10)

##### D. [A short detour due to the dullness of hearers (5:11-6-20)]

1. Warning against apostasy (6:1-12)      2. Assurance of God's promise (6:13-20)

##### E. The mysterious Melchizedek, the OT priest-king, is a foreshadow, or 'type', of the coming Christ.

1. Therefore flee to the eternal, oath-sealed, Mechizedekian sinless human sacrifice for sin (7:1-28)

##### F. Jesus Christ's heavenly priestly ministry mediates a more glorious new covenant (8:1-13).

##### G. A clear conscience, access to God, and true forgiveness comes only through Christ's blood (9:9-28)

##### H. Christ's sacrifice once-for-all has secured the eternal new covenant; nor more sacrifices needed (10:1-18)

1. Therefore let us draw near to Christ with assurance, hold onto our confession, and meet together (10:19-39)

*"But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls."* (Heb 10:39)

*"[Those to whom the letter is addressed] cannot now, after the full and careful instruction our author has given them, pretend to be ignorant that any reversion to the shadowy forms and sacrifices of the Mosaic law can only mean the negation of the Christian gospel. There follows, appropriately, a prolonged and powerful exhortation to lay firm hold of the blessings of the new covenant which God has made available to them through the mediation of Jesus Christ, our sole Redeemer and Lord."* - Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Hebrews*, 404.

#### II. Text: Hebrews 11:1-16 – The Hall of Faith

*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.<sup>2</sup> For by it the people of old received their commendation.<sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.*

*<sup>4</sup> By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.<sup>5</sup> By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God.<sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.<sup>7</sup> By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*

*<sup>8</sup> By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.<sup>9</sup> By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.<sup>10</sup> For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.<sup>11</sup> By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.<sup>12</sup> Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.*

*<sup>13</sup> These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.<sup>14</sup> For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.<sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.<sup>16</sup> But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. (Heb 11:1-16)*

1. How is the Heb 11:1 definition of faith (“the assurance of things hoped for”) different from the uses of the term “hope” that are common today? How does the following quote bear this out?

*“Faith is a guarantee of the heavenly realities for which we hope; not only does it render them certain for us, but it envisages them as rightfully belonging to us; it is, in itself, and objective assurance of our definite enjoyment of them. Consequently, faith ‘takes possession by anticipation’ of these heavenly blessings and is a genuine commencement of the divine life with the guarantee of its everlasting permanence.” - C. Spicq*

Other words in Scripture used for the act of faith: *receiving* (John 1:12, Col 2:6), *looking* (Is 45:22), *coming unto Christ* (Matt 11:28, John 6:35), *fleeing for refuge* (Heb 6:18, Prov 18:10), *eating/drinking* (John 7:37), *leaning* (Micah 3:11), *trusting* (Is 26:4), *holding fast* (Deut 4:4)

2. What do modern calls advise us to have faith “in”? Biblically speaking, what is the object of our faith? Why is the idea of a faith’s object so important?
3. What is the first piece of “understanding” we get by faith in the list of Heb 11?

*“...most people, immersed in their own errors, are struck blind in such a dazzling theater.” - Calvin, Institutes, 1.5.8*

*“Now the faithful, to whom he has given eyes, see sparks of his glory, as it were, glittering in every created thing. The world was no doubt made, that it might be the theatre of the divine glory.” - Calvin, Hebrews, 266.*

4. Why did God accept Abel’s sacrifice and not Cain’s (see Gen 4:1-7)?
5. How do you think Abraham and Noah viewed the word of God? What did it cost each of them? Do we have the same attitude?

*“For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” (Matt 24:37ff)*

6. How could Abraham possibly have rejoiced at God’s promise of the father of Israel?

*“[W]e begin in this life, though various benefits, to taste the sweetness of the divine generosity in order to whet our hope and desire to seek after the full revelation of this.” - Calvin, Institutes, 3.9.3*

7. In light of the following verse, explain the “how much more” argument for us as New Testament believers?

*“Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” (John 8:56)*

*“Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, <sup>31</sup> he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.” (Acts 2:30-31)*