

Hebrews Book Study
Lesson Thirty-nine
Hebrews 11:3-5

Introduction/Review

Hebrews 11 begins with the best definition that the Bible provides for faith. Faith is the “substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Faith is the assurance that what we trust in (i.e. the God of the heavens) is real even though we may not have yet seen all of His glorious facets. Don’t be confused! The Christian faith is not blind and it is not in something that has not yet been seen. Fact is, Christianity solidifies our faith because God made Himself visible to us (John 1:1-14). Our faith then is firmly fixed on all of the promises of God.

Vs. 3 The writer begins where Genesis begins, because faith in God as the Creator of everything that exists is fundamental to the Bible’s view of reality. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command. If God is in control of nature and history, past and present, every generation of believers can trust his promises about the future, no matter what it may cost them. When the writer says what is seen was not made out of what was visible, he alludes to the definition of faith in v 1. Faith discerns that the universe of space and time has an invisible source and that it continues to be dependent on God’s command (lit. ‘God’s word’). Such faith is based on the revelation he has given us in Scripture.

Vs. 4 Surely you have asked the question, why did God receive Abel’s offering but He rejected the offering of Cain (Gen. 4:1-9)? The fundamental difference, and it is critically important to our understanding what God requires, is that Abel brought a faith offering and Cain brought a works offering. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD BY WORKS! Abel offered a blood sacrifice, a sacrifice which God Himself provided for Abel. His sacrifice was “more excellent” because he looked to God for God’s provision. Cain brought a works offering from the ground he toiled and labored over. He basically said, “Look at what I have done God. Aren’t you proud of me?” Abel, by faith, even today continues to speak from the grave. What does the author mean? We are still talking about Abel’s faith thousands of years after his death!

Vs. 5 Enoch’s experience of being taken from this life, so that he did not experience death was the sign that he was commended as one who pleased God. Gn. 5:22 and 24 insists that he ‘walked with God’ and Hebrews takes this to mean that his life was characterized by faith. Enoch essentially experienced the first rapture recorded in Scripture. His faith serves to strengthen our faith. If you thought it impossible to walk with God in obedience and then one day be translated from this sphere to another sphere, simply remember Enoch. The word “translated” is used 3 times to highlight the importance of a bodily rapture or snatching away. Enoch was not translated because he was good or because he did good things for God. Enoch believed in God by faith and it was counted to him as righteous. He was righteous by faith!