

## #17 Hebrews 11b

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**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.***

God warned Noah of His coming judgment on the World. Genesis tells us of Noah and the Flood, directly after reporting on fallen angels having mated with human women producing a race of hybrid giants. The Earth and the human population had become polluted from the evil of the fallen angels. We are told that Noah's ancestral line had been preserved by God, unpolluted by the evil angelic DNA. It says, 'Noah was ***perfect in his generations***'... perfect meaning, complete, whole and without blemish. God spoke to Noah and warned him of heretofore unknown things. It had never rained; there had never been a flood. In Gen 2 it says, 'For the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and *there was* no man to till the ground;<sup>6</sup> but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.' It is assumed that there was a kind of cloud canopy covering the Earth which kept everything at a perfect and comfortable temperature. No seasons, no ice caps, no winter or summer... just boring perfect climate all the time. A worldwide underground water system acted like our own blood systems. The Earth was created as a perfect system... almost like a living entity. When God brought the flood, it says that the underground water system was broken up which sent underground water to the surface to help cover all the Earth. No one even knew what rain was but Noah believed God and built the Ark. His belief in God's Word resulted in the salvation and preservation of the human race as well as all of the animals which repopulated the Earth after the Flood.

Like Abraham did later, Noah believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness. Noah 'condemned the World' in that he preached of coming judgment for as long as 100 years. No one believed him and so they were all condemned by their refusal to believe God's Word. The same was true all through the Old Testament, during the time of this letter being written to this group of Hebrews and on into our own time. Belief in God's Word results in righteousness and salvation; refusal to believe God's Word results in condemnation and judgment.

**Verse 8:** 'By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.<sup>9</sup> 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;<sup>10</sup> for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.'

Abraham left Ur in modern Iraq with his father Terah and his wife Sarai and lived in Haran in present day Syria. After Terah died, God said to Abraham, "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Gen 12:1

From just that simple command and promise, Abraham packed up everything he had and moved out... not even knowing to where. All he had was that God said 'go and then I will show you.' He traveled south to Canaan where God appeared to him and said, "'To your descendants I will give this land.'" God actually appeared to him... Abraham could see Him and hear Him. This would have been a 'Christophany,' an appearance of the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ.

Even though he was in the land which God had given to him, Abraham never 'put down roots.' He always lived as though he were just passing through because he was. He was living as an example to us; this World is not our home. Abraham was looking forward to his coming Heavenly home; he was looking forward to the New Jerusalem. On the Earth, he lived in tents. He was patiently waiting for God's promises; he was waiting for God's best for him. He believed God and he trusted God. Of course, he wasn't perfect and he blew it some times... sex with Hagar, resulting in Ishmael as well as when he lied to Abimelech about Sarah not being his wife... but all in all, he trusted God and waited for God's best and for God's timing.

Remember, the point of what he is writing to these Hebrews is that salvation is by faith, that righteousness is by faith and faith alone, not by any works at all. Abraham believed God and that alone was what resulted in God's good testimony of him, as being righteous and acceptable in God's sight. God spoke, Abraham believed what God said and acted in accordance with his belief. God said, 'I will give this land to your descendants who will be beyond number. Abraham didn't decide he had to go out and get the title deed to the land of Canaan. He didn't think he had to build a house with fences to make sure that God didn't forget. He just hung out in tents and waited for God to do what He had promised to do, when He chose to do it. In fact, Abraham never even saw the fulfillment of God's promises but that didn't cause him to disbelieve what God had said.

Abraham's greatest failures and Israel's and ours are when we believe that God's plans being accomplished is dependent upon our doing something or being able to do something. Abraham's greatest failure, sex with Hagar, resulted in Ishmael and all the problems from his descendants ever since. Israel's first great failure was in believing that conquering the Promised Land was dependent upon their military abilities; they trusted in themselves and saw that they weren't strong enough to defeat the giants. They didn't believe God which resulted in an entire generation dying in the wilderness.

God isn't interested in our abilities; He is looking for our trust in Him and His abilities.

By the way, you'll notice that Abraham dwelt in tents with **Isaac** and **Jacob**, the heirs with him of the same promise. God made clear that His promises were to Abraham through his son, Isaac, not Ishmael and through his grandson, Jacob, not Esau. Israel, the descendants of Jacob are God's chosen people of promise. Not the Arabs, the descendants of Ishmael, not the Egyptians, Ishmael's mother, Hagar was Egyptian and not the '*Palestinians*' who are descendants of the Philistines and Esau and also Lot through Ammon and Edom. All those claiming that '*Palestinians*' have any right to the Land of Israel are guilty of denying God's Word.

**Verse 11:** 'By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.'

Sarah didn't initially believe that God could do what He said. She heard His promise to Abraham and she laughed because she knew that humanly speaking, it was impossible for her to get pregnant. She was 90 at the time and Abraham was 100 so they probably weren't having a regular weekly date night.

It says, 'And God said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which *was* behind him.)<sup>11</sup> Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.<sup>12</sup> Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"<sup>13</sup> And the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear *a child*, since I am old?'<sup>14</sup> Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."<sup>15</sup> But Sarah denied *it*, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh!" Gen 18.

But we are told that she did believe God and here she is in this important list of faithful believers.

**Verse 12:** 'Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born *as many* as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.'

This is one of the areas of Scripture which causes me to wonder about Heaven and Eternity, about God's Kingdom over which we will rule and reign with the Lord Jesus Christ... about the idea that His Kingdom will continue to grow and expand forever. If God's Word says that the number of physical descendants of Abraham and Sarah through Isaac and Jacob... Israelites... will be more than the number of stars or the number of grains of sand in the sea... then that's what it really will be. That is a number far greater than all the humans who have ever even been born to this time... and God is not given to hyperbole. He doesn't exaggerate or make things up to be impressive... just thinking out loud, like I do...

**Verse 13:** These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

None of the people listed in this chapter saw the fulfillment of the main promise upon which the faith of all of them rested: eventually, God would send a Deliverer, a Savior from the lineage of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob and through that Savior, all the families of the Earth would be blessed. In other words, eventually, at least one member of every extended family on Earth would be saved. Some families would see many saved; some families, only one but through the Lord Jesus Christ, every family would be blessed and represented in Heaven. None of the Saints listed here ever saw the fulfillment of the promise but they believed God and they knew that Heaven and eternity were coming; they saw themselves as just passing through on their way to Heaven.

**Verse 14:** For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. <sup>15</sup> And truly if they had called to mind that *country* from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

The Bible uses the Exodus of Israel out of Egypt as a picture of the Christian's life. The nation of Israel was birthed and grew in the slavery of Egypt. We are born as unsaved sinners in slavery to the kingdom of darkness. God sent Moses to lead Israel out of bondage and they spent 40 years in the desert because of their unbelief; all the while they were looking backward to the comforts of Egypt, forgetting about the slavery and hardship. If not for Moses' leadership, they would have returned to slavery in Egypt. God sent the Lord Jesus Christ to lead us out of bondage and some of us spend many years wandering in unbelief, wishing to return to the pleasures and sins of this world. Finally Israel was led across the Jordan River into the Promised Land of Canaan. Eventually we will cross the river of death or go up in the Rapture to enter into the Promised Land of Heaven but we can only be successful in our Christian walk if we set our hearts and minds on the things above, not on the things below, not looking back to the sin from which we were delivered.

This world is not my home, I'm just passing through.

**Verse 16:** But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly *country*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Those who believe God, that He has prepared a place for us that is far better than anything we've ever known or could imagine, those people have the great honor that God is pleased to be known as their God. Imagine that: the God of the Universe, Creator of all that is, not only knows who we are but that He is actually pleased to be known as our God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ as not only our Lord, but also our friend, brother and husband. Imagine having God Almighty think about you in that way. That's the way it is.

What place is it that He has prepared for us? Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup> In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. <sup>4</sup> And where I go you know, and the way you know." John 14:1

Does He describe that place and does He make clear exactly who He created it for? Yes!

Revelation tells us: 'Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." <sup>10</sup> And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, <sup>11</sup> having the glory of God. Her light *was* like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. <sup>12</sup> Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: <sup>13</sup> three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

<sup>14</sup> Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. <sup>15</sup> And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. <sup>16</sup> The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs (1/8 mile: 1500 miles). Its length, breadth, and height are equal. <sup>17</sup> Then he measured its

wall: one hundred *and* forty-four cubits, *according* to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. <sup>18</sup> The construction of its wall was *of* jasper; and the city *was* pure gold, like clear glass. <sup>19</sup> The foundations of the wall of the city *were* adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation *was* jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, <sup>20</sup> the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. <sup>21</sup> The twelve gates *were* twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city *was* pure gold, like transparent glass.

<sup>22</sup> But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. <sup>23</sup> The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb *is* its light. <sup>24</sup> And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. <sup>25</sup> Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). <sup>26</sup> And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. <sup>27</sup> But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Rev 21:9

This is the place Jesus said He was going away to prepare for us. This is the place that all of these Old Testament Saints were looking forward to. Those who live there will be everyone whose names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundation of the World.

**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*, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

God commanded Abraham to offer up Isaac as a burnt sacrifice. This was an interesting game of chess. God said, 'Offer up Isaac.' Abraham said, 'Yes, Lord.' However, Abraham knew that God had commanded against murder. This was hundreds of years before the 10 Commandments, but God had still commanded against killing. After Cain killed Abel, ' And the LORD said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.' Then, after the flood, God said, 'Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.' Gen 9:5

Abraham knew this, but he also heard God say, 'Offer Isaac!' Abraham obeyed God and prepared the sacrifice but we also see that Abraham expected God to intervene. When Isaac asked Abraham where the lamb was for the sacrifice, Abraham responded, 'God will Himself supply the lamb.' He was speaking prophetically of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God, but he also expected God to stop him and yet, when God didn't stop him, he was prepared to go through with it and plunge the knife into Isaac, knowing that God was able to even raise Isaac from the dead; again, thinking prophetically of the Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham knew that God had said that his descendants would be through Isaac so he knew that eventually, they would go home together, that he would not leave Isaac buried on the mountain. God knew all along what He had planned and He also knew what Abraham would do. He wasn't testing Abraham for His Own sake; He was testing Abraham for Abraham's sake and for Isaac's sake so that Abraham and Isaac would know what was in their own hearts so that they would always know that they did trust God and that God was always trustworthy.

**Verse 20:** By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

When Isaac was old and ready to die, he blessed his twin sons, Jacob and Esau. He thought he would give the greater blessing to Esau the older, but God had other plans. Jacob deceived Isaac, who was blind, who then blessed Jacob with Esau's blessing: he said, "Surely, the smell of my son *is* like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed. Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. <sup>29</sup> Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!"

Isaac blessed Jacob by faith, but not how he thought he would. The faith was revealed afterward when Esau came in and expected to be blessed and Isaac realized that what he had done could not be reversed because God had planned and done it according to His will.

**Verse 21:** By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning on the top of his staff*.

Remember, the main point the writer is giving is that Salvation is by faith and only by faith, even all of the Old Testament Saints about whom his listeners were very familiar... Salvation is only by faith. So, the facet of each of the lives he is referencing is their faith. His major point in all these examples is their continued faith even in the face of death when they still had not seen the fulfillment of God's promises. They never saw the promised Messiah; they never saw the promised Kingdom. Abraham was facing the death of Isaac but by faith he continued to believe God's promises. When Isaac was dying, never having seen the fulfillment of God's promises, he continued to believe and passed on those promises as God planned.

When Jacob was dying, still not having seen the fulfillment of God's promises, he blessed Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Interestingly, God caused it to play out similarly to when Isaac had blessed Jacob, the younger, instead of Esau, the older. Joseph brought his sons and placed the older, Manasseh, to the forefront to be blessed by Jacob. Jacob, by faith, crossed his hands and gave the greater blessing to Ephraim, the younger.

Abraham had great failures in his life. So did Isaac and so did Jacob but they all died in faith, continuing to believe God and give Him glory. That is the surest mark of a truly born again person,...that they die in confidence, without fear, knowing they are in God's hands and that God is faithful to do all He has promised, either while we still live on the Earth, or after, when we stand before Him. He is faithful and His children know He is faithful to and through the end... forever.

Mom continues to grow weaker. She'll be 100 in June. Her ears fail, her eyes fail, her strength fails and her memory fails and yet, almost daily, I'll hear her quietly say, 'This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through.' Her life is totally boring and yet she doesn't complain. She just waits for the Lord to do what He's going to do. I remind her that the Rapture is coming and she continues to look for it, with me, every day. She is looking for a country and city whose builder and maker is God so He is not ashamed to be called her God.

If she dies before the Rapture comes, by faith, I will expect to see her again very soon and she'll really be something in her glorified, eternal body like that of the Lord Jesus Christ, as will the loved ones some of you have lost who are in Heaven waiting for you.

**Verse 22:** By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

When Joseph died, the small tribe of Israel, the families of his 11 brothers, all of his nieces and nephews, they were still honored citizens in Egypt by virtue of being related to Joseph, the man who single handedly saved Egypt from the great famine many years before. He didn't foresee that they would eventually be enslaved and kept for the next 400 years until God raised up Moses to lead them out but by faith, but he expected that they would eventually leave, that Egypt was not their home and that someday they would all go out and return to the Promised Land.

When I was growing up, I felt like Joseph and the other Israelites. Both sets of my grandparents were from this area. Mom grew up on Sauvie Island and Dad grew up in the house where we still live; my grandfather built it in 1928. By the time my sister and I came along, our home life was at times pretty miserable. All through the years of wandering in the wilderness of Arizona or the deserts of Palm Springs, I always dreamed of some day living in Portland. Even though I had never lived here, it was my home. I had heard the stories from Mom and Dad. The only times I was happy was when we would come up here for vacation. Even now, even though I hate what Portland has become, when we fly home, when I see the big Douglas Firs and the Columbia River, something happens inside... a peace... I'm home. On Earth, this town and our house feels like

home but I would give it all up in a heartbeat for the Rapture or for death... or if God made it clear that He wanted us to do something else or be somewhere else.

Like the Patriarchs, I'm looking for a heavenly country whose builder and maker is God; therefore, He is not ashamed to be called my God.

**Verse 23:** By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw *he was* a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

Moses' parents hid him, believing by faith that God's will was that their son live. This was the first instance of Moses' life in which he was a prefigure of the Lord Jesus Christ... remember, Herod commanded all baby boys be killed but God warned his step father Joseph, to take Mary and Jesus down to Egypt until Herod died.

**Verse 24:** 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.

The writer is telling his readers that salvation is only by faith and not at all by the works of the Law. So, to really make the point, here he is saying that even Moses... the one to whom was given the Law, directly from God... even Moses lived by faith and his righteousness was only by faith... not by the Law.

He shows his readers the faith of Moses by showing examples, choices he made that were guided by faith in God and not by what he could see. The Christian life is a life of choices... we can and must choose every day. Faith always chooses... it makes the hard choices, even when the evidence calls for a different choice... and Moses made choices, hard choices... choices that many would be unable to make.

Moses is the next in the writer's long line of faith filled Saints. Abel showed how to live by faith. Enoch showed how to walk by faith. Noah showed how to work by faith. The Patriarchs showed how to be victorious in facing death by faith without having seen the promises of God fulfilled. Now Moses will show how faith makes the difficult choices, no matter what.

Moses was 40 years old when he left Egypt. He was Pharaoh's adopted grandson. Everything the World had to offer was his... all wealth, all privilege, all pleasure... everything. He had been educated by the wisest men on Earth. Everything was his but God had had His hand on Moses from his birth. He had been taught from his mother, before he was given to Pharaoh's daughter, about God and about God's promises for the people of Israel. God gave him a deep understanding of His plans and purposes for Israel and he must have recognized that God was calling him to lead them.

He had to choose. By faith, he chose God's ways and rejected all that the World contained. Moses was a prefigure of Jesus Christ. The choice he had to make was second only in difficulty to the choice that Jesus Christ made. Jesus Christ chose to leave the splendor of Heaven to enter a human body. He chose to reject Satan's offer of all the kingdoms of this World to go to the Cross. Moses chose to leave the splendor of Egypt's glory to be counted among the slaves of Egypt; he rejected the luxury of Egypt for the hardship of the Israelites. Both of them looked, by faith, to the future, understanding that the rewards of faithfulness to God and His plans were far greater than anything of Earth.

The choices that Moses had to make are the same choices each of us must make on a daily basis. Every one of us are called to deny ourselves and to faithfully follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Every day we must choose whether to indulge our flesh or deny our flesh and God will always strengthen us to be able to make the right choices even though we don't always do it. He will never put before us a choice that we are incapable of making, that He won't by His Holy Spirit, enable us to properly make. Moses had the strength to reject all of Egypt to be counted among God's people. The thing we fail to recognize is that every choice we are called upon to make, no matter how seemingly small, has eternal consequences. Every choice will result in either gaining unimaginable eternal rewards or losing unimaginable eternal rewards. That's why Jesus said that even something as seemingly small as giving a cup of water in His name will gain eternal rewards.

Every choice we make, every action we take, affects forever now... just ask any of these heroes of faith.