Hebrews 11:1-40

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

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***Hebrews 11:1–19*** (ESV)  
**1** Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. **2** For by it the people of old received their commendation. **3** 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. **4** 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. **5** 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. **6** 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. **7** 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. **8** 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. **9** 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. **10** For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. **11** By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. **12** 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. **13** 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. **14** For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. **15** If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. **16** 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. **17** By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, **18** of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” **19** He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.--

***Hebrews 11:20–40*** (ESV)  
**20** By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. **21** By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. **22** By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones. **23** By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict. **24** By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, **25** choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. **26** He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. **27** By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. **28** By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them. **29** By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. **30** By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. **31** By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. **32** And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— **33** who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, **34** quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. **35** Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. **36** Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. **37** They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— **38** of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. **39** And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, **40** since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

1. Give a brief review of the Chapter 10.

The Torah shadows the good things to come – example here being the priesthood. The first (Levitical) priesthood is a shadow of the second priesthood led by Yeshua. *“He does away with the first in order to establish the second.” “Now, by a single offering he completed for all time those who are being sanctified”.* Since most likely the audience is no longer allowed to participate in the temple sacrifices, they need to know that their sins have completely (**teleioo**) taken care of, once and for all, in a way that could never be accomplished through the animal sacrifices. The old system that they are used to takes a back seat to the fuller, more complete (**teleioo**) work of Yeshua.

Therefore we should live with full assurance of our faith in Yeshua. We need to be living in community, encouraging and supporting one another to persevere with endurance. Not shrinking back. We need to remember our first love and continue living our lives in faithfulness, regardless of the persecution or other consequences. Those who shrink back are destroyed, but those who live by faith preserve their souls.

1. Chapter 11 is all about men of faith. Consider Heb 10:39 as the author’s segue to this topic. What can we gather from this verse about his purpose in writing to them about these men of faith?

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

He wants the people to live lives of faith, in spite of persecution and separation from the religious system they have always been a part of. “The righteous shall live by their faith.” Even though that faith is something not always seen. Just like their fathers from Abraham on, they must live in faith, living faithful lives in obedience, believing the promises even though their fulfillment is not yet seen.

1. What is the repeating pattern you notice beginning in verse 1 and repeating consistently up through verse 19?

There are important people in biblical history who, by faith, did what they were instructed by YHWH to do. They were commended and given a reward. These people died, but are still spoken of (they still “speak”) to this day.

1. List every “person of old” that the author makes reference to in these 19 verses.

* Abel
* Enoch
* Noah
* Abraham (twice, once through leaving his hometown and once through binding Isaac)
* Sarah

1. How do each of these “persons of old” parallel the Messiah in a unique way?

* Abel - Abel offered an acceptable sacrifice to YHWH.
* Enoch - Enoch was taken up into heaven after walking with YHWH.
* Noah - Noah constructed an ark that saved his household, and in fact all life on earth.
* Abraham (twice, once through leaving his hometown and once through binding Isaac) - Abraham left his home to dwell in a sukkah. Also, he offered up his son, knowing that YHWH would fulfill his promise to give him many offspring through Isaac, even if God had to resurrect Isaac from the dead.
* Sarah - This might parallel the virgin birth or the conception of Yeshua.

1. All throughout Hebrews, we’ve been reminded of the author using the Hebrew **kal v’chomer** (light vs heavy argument) saying, “If X, how much more so Y?” What message was the author trying to bring home at the end of Heb 11:4 “And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.”?

Abel, who was one of the people of old, was (and is) a well known person in Scripture. Every Hebrew person would have known the story of Cain and Abel. His faithful sacrifice was accepted by YHWH and even though Abel has been dead for thousands of years, the author is saying that he still speaks to this day. The author is saying that, despite a person in God’s plan being dead, they are still relevant to human history and God’s large plan for redemption. If Abel, **who is dead**, still speaks to this day because of his faith, how much more so does the Son of God, **who remains alive**, still speak because of his faith!

1. In Heb. 11:6, it says that God *rewards* those who seek him. The five people discussed above were *rewarded* (or *commended,* see v. 1, 4, 5*)*. How?

All of the rewards above showed a physical manifestation of God’s favor towards the person (except for Abel, which resulted in his death as a result of Cain’s sin). Enoch was taken directly to God, Noah and his family saved from a flood, Abraham made the father of all of Judeo-Christianity, and Sarah giving birth to God’s promised offspring (and eventually the Messiah). Regardless of the type of blessing, God showed favor to these people spiritually as well, allowing them to “speak” even to this day. This blessing is arguably better than any blessing they may have received on earth, especially since they did not come to see the entirety of that blessing.

1. In Heb. 11:9, it states that Abraham entered the promised land due to his faith. Where else have we discussed the promised land and faith and what was the outcome? (See Heb. 3:14-19)

The people of Israel were told to enter the promised land- vv after it was spied upon, but due to their unbelief, many of them were not permitted to enter. This was due to their fear of the potential battle to come, despite YHWH telling them that they would be victorious. These people did not act in faith and were not rewarded (commended) with the promised land.

1. Heb. 11:13 says that all of these major characters in Biblical history “died in faith”. In making an argument for the Messiah, why does the author keep bringing up that these people died?

The Me>believers didn’t c

=[\onnect a man who died only a few decades back to those in the Biblical accounts they’ve heard their whole lives. The author is reminding them that all of these people have many things in common. They lived a life obedient to YHWH, they carried out their calling, they were temporarily rewarded on earth (although they did not see the fullness of that reward), and they died! Once again, *if all of these people in biblical history experienced this, how much more so is its importance when the Son of God experiences this!* Furthermore, they all died, while the Messiah was resurrected and still lives!

1. The people listed were called “exiles” of the earth. More specifically the Greek word is *parepídēmos,* a“temporary resident” or “someone temporarily passing through”. What other passage in this reading speaks of where they are to be permanently residing?

In verse 16, it speaks of a heavenly country that God promises to those who have faith. This is the new Jerusalem, heaven, and earth promised by God when his work is complete.

1. The author is not directly exhorting or warning the people here, but over the course of this book he has made two options very clear. Who are the two groups of people the readers can imitate?

Firstly, the believers can choose to live lives that reject God’s rest, provision, and source of righteousness. They can reject God and be like **the fathers before them**, specifically those **in the desert during exile.** They will not be welcomed into the promised land and they will not receive God’s favor, reward, or commendation. **Or they can be like the “people of old” who know that God will provide the Messiah**, and who live faithfully within the **knowledge of his provision**. They will be welcomed into his promised land. These are people of faith that the author is using not only to prove that the Messiah is legitimate, but also to show that ultimate rejection of the Messiah will lead to an exile-like disapproval from God.

Also, perhaps his main point is that the “people of old” lived in faith, never really seeing the fulfillment of God’s promises. **So too, the Hebrews must live in faith, even though they may not be able to see the fulfillment of God’s promises.** (vs 13 “these all died, not having received the things promised”)

1. Consider Heb 11:17-19. Similarly to question five, the author is making another strong point for the readers. Remember, “if X, then even more so Y”. This time he’s using Abraham and Isaac. Explain the author’s motive behind writing this.

The author is making the argument that Abraham had so much faith in God’s promise of offspring that he was willing to offer up his only son, given to him even in the oldest of age. Abraham knew that even if he ended up killing Isaac, God would resurrect Isaac from the dead in order to fulfill his promise to Abraham. Therefore, if Jews believe that God would resurrect Abraham’s son from the dead, *how much more so* should they trust that God Himself would raise His own *Son* from the grave!

1. In Heb 11:19, why does the author say, “figuratively speaking, he did receive him back”? What does that mean?

Isaac had totally committed to sacrificing his son. He was “as good as dead”. God saved Isaac. It mattered little whether God saved him before or after the knife struck.

1. Hebrews 11:20-31 gives further examples of “people of old” who demonstrated faith in the promises of God. List each of these people, and how they showed faith.

* Isaac – passing on the blessing of God’s promises to Jacob (Gen 27:27-29)
* Jacob – passing on the blessing of God’s to Joseph’s sons Ephraim and Manasseh   
  (Gen 47-48)
* Joseph – showing faith that he knew the exodus would happen by making his sons promise to take his bones with them (Gen 50:25-26)
* Moses’ parents – having faith in God’s protection and hiding Moses (Ex 2:2-3)
* Moses – when he chose to side with God’s people over Pharoah’s people
* Moses – when he didn’t fear Pharaoh and chose to trust in the true but invisible God
* Moses – when he in faith kept the first Passover in obedience to God’s direction   
  (Ex 12:21-20)
* Moses & Israelites – when they crossed the Red Sea in faith (Ex 14:20-30)
* Joshua & Israelites – when they obeyed God, circling the city in faith for 7 days at the battle of Jericho (Josh 6:15-20)
* Rahab – who helped the spies, confessing that YHWH is the God of all heaven and earth **(Josh 2:8-11)**

1. In Heb 11:26, why does the author say that Moses “considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt”? What does this mean, especially “the reproach of Christ”?

The abuse / reproach of Messiah IS GREATER THAN the all the treasures of Egypt.

Even though Moses did not live during the time of the Messiah, Moses had faith that God would provide “salvation” (Yeshua). Moses endured the reproach of Egypt. His suffering, as well as the suffering of all God’s people, is in some way linked to the suffering of Messiah. All that Moses suffered was to further God’s plan of salvation for his people, which ended in the coming (and suffering) of the Messiah.

So Moses, by faith knew that God would provide salvation, and considered that any suffering to that end would far outweigh any worldly treasure.

1. Hebrews 11:32-38 briefly lists further instances of those who showed great faith, some seeing positive results, others enduring persecution. Heb 11:35-37 in particular makes reference to acts of persecution. What situations might these verses be referring to?

It seems like this is still speaking of situations in the Hebrew Scriptures:

* Women receiving back their dead – for example Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17), and Elisha and the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4)
* Torture ??
* Mocking, flogging, chains, imprisonment – Jeremiah, Paul
* Sawn in two – Tradition holds that this was the fate of Isaiah. (Justin, Origen, Pseudopigrapha)  
  See Martyrdom of Isaiah 5:4-14, below\_
* Killed by sword – 1 Kings 19:10 says this was the fate of many prophets

**Martyrdom of Isaiah 5:4-14 (OT Pseudopigrapha)**:  
 4 And Belchîrâ said to Isaiah: ‘Say: “I have lied in all that I have spoken, and likewise the ways of Manasseh are good and right. 5 And the ways also of Balchîrâ and of his associates are good.” ’ 6 And this he said to him when he began to be sawn in sunder. 7 But Isaiah was (absorbed) in a vision of the Lord, and though his eyes were open, he saw them not. 8 And Balchîrâ spake thus to Isaiah: ‘Say what I say unto thee and I will turn their heart, and I will compel Manasseh and the princes of Judah and the people and all Jerusalem to reverence thee.’ 9 And Isaiah answered and said: ‘So far as I have utterance (I say): Damned and accursed be thou and all thy powers and all thy house. 10 For thou canst not take (from me) aught save the skin of my body.’ 11 And they seized and sawed in sunder Isaiah, the son of Amoz, with a **wood**-saw. 12 And Manasseh and Balchîrâ and the false prophets and the princes and the people [and] all stood looking on. 13 And to the prophets who were with him he said before he had been sawn in sunder: ‘Go ye to the region of Tyre and Sidon; for me only hath God mingled the cup.’ 14 And when Isaiah was being sawn in sunder, he neither cried aloud nor wept, but his lips spake with the Holy Spirit until he was sawn in twain.

1. In Heb 11:38, how does the author summarize his characterization of these men of faith? Why?

The world was not worthy of them. They lived rejected and mistreated by the world, but in truth they were more worthy than them all.

The readers of Hebrews should be encouraged to live the same way in face of their present persecutions. AS SHOULD WE.

1. In Heb 11:39-40, the author summarizes his main point and shows us more of WHY he has taken us down this path of remembering people of faith. What is his main point? What was “promised”? And WHY has the author walked us down this path? What does “***apart from us they should not be made perfect***” mean? What is the implied **kal v’chomer** (light vs heavy argument) in this?

**Main point:** All these great men and women lived by faith in God’s promises EVEN THOUGH they did not see the fulfillment of God’s promises.

**The Promise:** What was God’s ultimate promise? Salvation. The Messiah. Complete Forgiveness and righteousness. Sins wiped clean, once and for all time.

**Why:** THEY (the “old ones of faith”) didn’t live to see God’s promise fulfilled, but WE (the Hebrew readers) have been able to see it!

***“Apart from us they should not be made perfect”***: perfect = complete (GR **teleioo**). The old ones of faith are made complete though us, since we (the readers of Hebrews) have been blessed to see the fulfillment of the promise made to them. They lived in faith, not seeing the promise fulfilled. But we now see it fulfilled.

**Kal v’chomer:** IF they lived by faith, not seeing the promise fulfilled, HOW MUCH MORE should we live by faith, having now seen the promise fulfilled!