

Hebrews

Chapter 11:13-40

November 5, 1995

- **Hebrews Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Christ is greater than the prophets and the angels.
- Chapter 2 Christ's message is greater than the angel's.
- Chapter 3 Christ is greater than Moses.
- Chapter 4 Christ is greater than Joshua and His rest is superior.
- Chapter 5 Christ's High Priesthood is greater than the Aaronic Priesthood.
- Chapter 6 God's faithfulness to Abraham and his seed is confirmed by an oath.
- Chapter 7 Christ is a Priest in the order of Melchizedek and Christ is greater than Abraham.
- Chapter 8 Christ is Mediator of a new covenant.
- Chapter 9 Christ offered a better sacrifice at a better sanctuary.
- Chapter 10 Christ's sacrifice was offered only once and then He sat down.
- Chapter 11 The just have always lived by faith.

- **Introduction & Review**

In the previous section, the author began a lengthy dissertation on the patriarchs of the faith who have lived by faith. Having gone back to the creation of the universe, the author then moved on to give examples of those whom we hold in high esteem as being the faithful. In the present section, he continues with those examples and provides instruction about the heavenly city of God.

Last week we defined faith to be the natural response to the perceived faithfulness of the object of our faith. For Christians, the object of faith is God. As we consider Him faithful there is only one possible correct response-faithful obedience. If this is not manifest then we are either not considering Him or we are publicly declaring that He is faithless. Important: it is necessary for Christians to distinguish between blessings and promises. God is faithful to bless us and He has made promises to us. Although God's promises are a blessing to us, His blessings are not necessarily promised to us. Example: it is a blessing when God heals us from our infirmities, but He has not promised that Christians would be free from sickness. Don't impose a blessing upon God as though it were a promise.

- **Exposition**

Hebrews 11:13-40

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

- Making reference back to vs. 10 where he described Abraham as longing for a divine city, the author here discusses again this vision that the faithful saints down through time have shared. The concept of the New Jerusalem is one that has been confused and many have been misled. Let's consider this heavenly city:

Revelation 3:12 The new Jerusalem is the city of God and it comes from Him down out of Heaven.

Revelation 21:2 The New Jerusalem is prepared as a bride for her husband.

Revelation 21:9-27 The New Jerusalem is the Bride of the Lamb and it is described as a city with glory.

Galatians 4:24-27 The New Jerusalem is our mother and is filled with the descendants of the barren woman.

Hebrews 12:18-24 The New Jerusalem is not a physical city but rather is the Church of Christ. The elect are those who are the citizens of this city.

- The glorious city which the physical city of Jerusalem only pictured is the Church of Christ. We are citizens of this city although we are temporarily traveling in this land. Although this city is not in heaven it is ruled from heaven where Christ sits at the right hand of the Father.
- There have always been cities made by the hands of men. If the faithful had been looking for that kind of city, they could have just stayed where they were. But their leaving, declared that they were looking for something else.
- We have joint citizenship between these two cities (the USA and the New Jerusalem) Eph 2:19, Phil 3:20. Both of these cities are made manifest down here on the earth. But the city that is made by God does not have its authority from down here it comes from heaven; its constitution is a heavenly one.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

- Although we have recently discussed this, notice two things: first, we see that Abraham truly believed that Isaac was going to die and that God would raise him from the dead. Secondly, the promise from God concerning Abraham's descendants was specifically through Isaac not Ishmael.

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

- Although deceived, Isaac believed the promises given to his father and to him that they would have innumerable descendants and that they would inherit a homeland. Isaac never saw this but the blessing given by him to Jacob clearly proclaims his belief in the faithfulness of God.
- There is some question as to how it is that Isaac did this blessing by faith when he was deceived and was violating the oracle of God given to Rebecca. The most plausible explanation is that Isaac was not aware of the oracle. Also note that Rebecca's actions were not motivated by greed but rather the foolish thinking that the will of God could be thwarted.

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

- Joseph, when in Egypt brought his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to Jacob to be blessed. Again, Jacob did not see the fulfillment of the promises of God but, because he was assured of them, he blesses the sons of Joseph.

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

- Joseph was embalmed in Egypt but many years before, he knew that God had promised them a homeland and many, many descendants and therefore that Israel would one day leave Egypt. When this occurred, Joseph wanted his bones to go with them.

Hebrews 11:23-29

- Moses' parents give us a good example of civil disobedience when an authority calls you to violate the commands of God. However, as Christians we must also be characterized as a people who are usually obedient, cheerful and compliant citizens so that when the day comes to disobey we might not be judged scofflaws.
- Moses considered the curses and trials which would occur as a result of being identified with Christ to be greater riches than the wealth that could have been his in Pharaoh's palace.
- Verse 27 could refer to either Moses' flight into Midian after having killed the Egyptian soldier or it could refer to his leading the nation of Israel out of Egypt. The latter seems more likely given the timeline of the events next mentioned by the author.

Hebrews 11:30-39

- The author is relentless in his demonstration that the proper response for those, who were tempted to abandon that which they once defended, is to consider the faithfulness of God and live by faith. The extensive list is meant to teach the persuasiveness of

the truth that the righteous have always lived by faith.

40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. (NKJV)

- This is a fascinating verse because it brings out the fact that the Elect are to be revealed by God over time. Those who have understood God's intentions by faith had longed for the days in which the author of Hebrew wrote. The coming of the Lord and the revelation of the kingdom of God was something that the saints of old rejoiced in. The New Jerusalem is unified in Christ but will not be complete until all of its citizens are drawn in. This is true Zionism.