

HEBREWS CHAPTER 11

[VII] UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS CHRISTIAN FAITH (10:19 - 12:29)

1. Christian faith involves bold confidence towards God and stimulating provocation towards Christians (10:19-25).
2. Christian faith involves taking the warning (4th) about the wilful sin of apostasy seriously (10:26-31).
3. Christian faith involves the call to perseverance in doing God's will (10:32-39).

4. Christian faith involves following in the footsteps of Old Testament believers (11:1-40).

a. The nature of faith (11:1-3).

11:1. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. The word is not objective in the sense of giving 'substance' or 'essence' or 'foundation' (1:3) to our hopes, but subjective in the sense of giving 'confident assurance' or 'guarantee' or 'attestation' (υποστασις) that things we now hope for will in the future be realities.

Faith is the conviction of things not seen. Not in the sense of 'refutation' of error (2 Tim 3:16), but in the sense of 'conviction' or ' (in legal sense) 'evidence' or 'proof' (ελεγχος) that the invisible things belong to the spiritual order and that they are invisible because they belong to the future, like the fulfilment of God's promises. Physical eyesight produces conviction or evidence of visible things, but faith is the organ which enables people to see the invisible order (cf. 11:27; Rom 8:24-25).

11:2. God commended the elders for their faith. 'The elders' in the sense of the men and women of old (οι πρεσβυτεροι) (cf. οι πατερας)(1:1). The writer sets them in historical sequence, gives an outline of God's salvation history (faith and righteousness) throughout the Old Testament period of promise until the beginning of the New Testament period of fulfilment - the faith of Jesus Christ (12:2). Their faith is presented as 'a testimony' or 'divine recommendation' (εμαρτυρηθησαν)(indicative aorist passive) from the Old Testament. The passive may be the so-called theological passive indicating that it is God who bears witness concerning the elders.

11:3. An illustration that faith is a conviction of things not seen. Only 'by faith' (πιστει)(dative of instrument) in God's revelation, Christians understand (νοουμεν)(indicative present active) that God 'formed' (κατηρτισθαι)(infinitive perfect passive) the 'ages' (αιωνας)(cf. 1:2) in the sense of the 'the whole universe of space and time'. The perfect emphasises that the universe now 'exists'. In Hebrews 1:3 God made the universe by the agency of the Son of God and in Hebrews 11:3 he fashioned it by his 'word' (not 'λογος', but 'ρημα'), his 'creative command' (cf. Gen 1:3). "So that what is seen (το βλεπομενον) was not made (γεγονεναι)(infinitive perfect medium)(did not become and now exists) out of what 'appeared' or 'was visible' (εκ φαινομενων)(participle present passive)" While Greek speculation says that the ordered world was formed out of formless matter, the bible maintains that God created the universe 'out of nothing' (creatio ex nihilo). Christians maintain this by faith in God's revelation, especially in Genesis chapter 1-2.

b. The faith of the Antediluvians (11:4-7).

11:4. Abel. By faith Abel offered to God a 'better' or 'more excellent' (πλειονα) sacrifice than Cain. People in the past have speculated about the word 'better'. They said that Abel was a shepherd, but Cain only an agriculturalist. Abel offered living things, but Cain a lifeless thing. Abel offered what grew spontaneously in accordance with nature, but Cain offered what was forcibly produced by the ingenuity of covetous man. Abel offered his sacrifice in the right way, but Cain did not divide his sacrifice in the right way. Abel offered a sacrifice by shedding blood, but Cain did not shed blood.

However in both cases they brought the appropriate firstfruits of their increase and were not making sacrifices of atonement! The material of their sacrifices was quite suitable.

God had regard for Abel's sacrifice and would also have regard for Cain's sacrifice if Cain would do well and deal with or master the sin crouching at his door (Gen 4:7). Cain had to master the sin that threatened to be his undoing. The word 'crouch' in Hebrew is 'robesh', which is cognate with Akkadian 'rabishu', the name of a demon. 'Sin' is depicted as an evil power lying in wait to pounce upon its prey, but it is powerless against a man of righteous life!

Abel's sacrifice was accepted, because he was righteous! (Mt 23:35) and Cain's sacrifice was rejected, because his work was evil (1 Jn 3:12). The Lord detests the sacrifices of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him (Prov 15:8; cf. Isa 1:13).

Sacrifice is acceptable to God NOT for its material content, but insofar it is the outward of a devoted and obedient heart (cf. 1 Sam 15:22-23; Ps 40:6-8 / Heb 10:5-8; Isa 1:11-18; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8). Because righteousness comes only by faith (cf. 10:38; 11:6), the writer can make a statement about Abel's faith.

Through his faith Abel continues 'to speak', even though he himself was dead. Abel's blood was 'crying' (speaking) to God from the ground (Gen 4:10), protesting against his murder and appealing for vindication, just like the souls of the martyrs in Revelation 6:9-10. But the blood of Jesus Christ speaks a better word (speaks more graciously) than the blood of Abel (12:24), because it brings a message of cleansing, forgiveness and peace with God to all who put their faith in Jesus Christ.

11:5. Enoch was commended to be a person that pleased God before he was taken from this life. "The Hebrew 'Enoch walked with God' is rendered in the Greek translation "He was well-pleasing to God" (Gen 5:24a). 'Walking with God' in the Old Testament revelation consisted of a personal relationship with God accompanied by the practice of justice and lovingkindness (Mic 6:8; Gen 17:1; 24:40; 48:15). God is only pleased with a righteous life and righteousness comes only by faith! Therefore, the writer could make a statement about Enoch's faith.

The Hebrew "He was not; for God took him" is rendered in the Greek translation, "He was not found, because God 'translated' (μετεθηκεν)(indicative perfect active) him" (Gen 5:24b). The New Testament (11:5) follows the Greek Old Testament translation. "He was not found, because God 'translated' (μετεθηκεν) him in order that he should not see death". The word 'translated' denotes a turning, changing or transformation for the better, a transfer or move to a new home. Here it is a reference to the 'transfer' or 'translation' of Enoch (his soul) to heaven or to his spiritual 'transformation'. However, the emphasis is not on this word, but on the fact that Enoch was righteous and therefore had faith (cf. 10:38).

11:6. Without faith it is impossible to please God and impossible to be justified! This faith is a faith in the invisible order and a faith in what is still a future reality! It is not a believe in the existence of 'a god', but a believe in the existence of 'the God of the Bible', who revealed himself in the Old Testament prophets and finally in Jesus Christ (1:1). Those who 'approach' (προσερχομαι) him (cf. 4:16; 7:25; 10:22; 11:6) can do so in full confidence that he exists, that his word is true and that he will never reject or disappoint a person that sincerely 'seeks' or 'searches out' (εκζητουςιν) him. The reward for earnestly seeking the God of the bible is the joy of finding him! God himself is the ultimate joy of believers (Ps 43:4). Faith is thus a faith in the existence of the invisible God and a faith that waits patiently and confidently for the reward promised (10:35-26).

11:7. Noah. His faith begins with God's word: a 'divine revelation, injunction or warning' (χρηματισθεις)(participle aorist passive). Noah believed that God would certainly do what he said. Faith then brought Noah into action and his faith is made complete by his action (Js 2:22). God announced to Noah that he would something that has never happened before in the experience of Noah or his contemporaries (the flood). Noah's faith took the form of a conviction of things not seen and of things still future. The 'building' or 'construction' (κατεσκευασεν)(indicative aoristactive) of the ark far inland and over such a long period must have seemed absurd to his contemporaries, but in the end his faith was vindicated and their unbelief was condemned. "By his faith he 'condemned' or 'passed judgement on' (κατεκρινεν) the world". Noah became the heir of righteousness which is according to faith. His faith was his ready acceptance of what God had said.

Noah in the New Testament.

- i) The flood of Noah's day that destroyed the wicked is an illustration of the sudden final judgement and a foreshadowing of the second coming of Jesus Christ (Mt 24:37-39).
- ii) The safe passage through the waters which overwhelmed others is a symbol of Christian baptism (1 Pet 3:20-21).
- iii) Noah himself is described as 'a preacher of righteousness' (2 Pet 2:5).
- iv) The connection between grace and righteousness. "Noah found favour (grace) in God's eyes. Noah was a righteous man" (Hebrew: sadiq, Greek: δικαιοσ)(Hebrew: hen, Greek: χαρις).(Gen 6:8-9).
- v) The connection between faith and obedience. "Noah did everything just as God commanded him" (Gen 6:22)

c. The faith of Abraham (11:8-12).

11:8. His faith begins with God's word: a divine call (καλουμενος)(participle present passive). Abraham believed that God could certainly do what he promised. Faith then brought Abraham into action and his faith was made complete by his action (Js 2:22). God called Abraham to go to a country he did not know and to live there without ever possessing it is person. Abraham took God at his word. Abraham believed, obeyed and went (Gen 26:4-5). His outward obedience was the visible evidence of his inward faith!

11:9-10. Abraham lived as a stranger in a foreign country. He lived in tents because he was looking forward to the city with foundations. He 'lived (as a stranger)' (παρωκησεν<παροικειω) 'as a foreigner' (ως αλλοτριαν) in the promised land. 'Looking forward' or 'waiting expectantly' (εξεδεχετο<εκδεχομαι)(indicative imperfect medium).

God's covenant promise (Gen 12:1-3) was reconfirmed along with the promise of an heir (Gen 15:18-19) and again reconfirmed after the requirement of circumcision (Gen 17:8) and finally reconfirmed after he was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen 22:16-18).

God's promised inheritance was not an incentive to obedience, but the reward for obedience. The covenant promise was not the visible possession of the land, but to Abraham the promise of God was as substantial as its realisation. Thereafter Abraham lived in the good of that promise. Year after year he pitched his moving tent amid the settled inhabitants of Palestine. He was "in the land, but not of the land" (cf. Jn 17:11,14). He was "Abraham, the Hebrew" (Gen 14:3) and commanding their respect as "a prince of God" (Gen 23:6), but he did not own a square centimetre of the promised land until he bought the field of Machpelah as a burial ground. He lived as a stranger in a foreign land. The secret of his patience was that his faith and his hope were not fixed on a transient kingdom of the temporal order, but on the eternal reality. Just like the true rest of God is not the earthly Canaan in the time of Joshua (4:8), so the only city with enduring foundations was not the earthly Jerusalem. God himself was 'the architect', 'craftsman', 'designer' or 'maker' of the plan (τεχνιτης) and 'builder', 'constructor' or 'maker' that executes the plan (δημιουργος).

He was looking forward to the heavenly Jerusalem, the kingdom of God in the spiritual and eternal order, which became effectively accessible by the completion of Christ's high priestly work and into which all believers in Christ come to be enrolled as true citizens (cf. 11:16; 12:22-24; 13:14; Phil 3:20; Gal 4:26). Only since the first coming of Jesus Christ, Abraham and the other Old Testament believers equally enjoy the blessings of New Testament believers in the heavenly Jerusalem, because they are "alive to God" (Lk 20:37-38). They, who walked with God on the earth, now live to God in heaven.

11:11. Translation.

The Greek text says, By faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted him faithful who had promised" (αυτη Σαρρα ... δυναμιν εις καταβολην σπερματος ελαβεν).

The problem is that Sarah laughed in unbelief before the conception (Gen 18:12-15). Even Abraham laughed in appreciation of the divine absurdity of the situation (Gen 17:17). The further problem is that the Greek words 'deposition of seed' (καταβολην σπερματος) refer to the father's part in the generative process and not to the mother's part. 'Deposition of seed' cannot be construed to mean 'conception of seed'.

The solution is to construe the words in the dative case instead of the nominative case: 'αυτη Σαρρα' (with 'ι' under the 'η' and 'α') ('together with Sarah') instead of 'αυτη Σαρρα' (Sarah herself). Then verse 11 still speaks of Abraham's faith and not of Sarah's faith!

Correct translation: "By faith he (Abraham) also, *together with Sarah*, received power to beget a child when he was past age, since he counted him faithful who had promised". Verse 12 follows on very naturally.

11:12. "Thus from this one man (Abraham), when he was already as good as dead (as far as the hope of founding a family was concerned, cf. Romans 4:19), there came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore" (Gen 15:5; 22:17) all in fulfilment of God's covenant promise!

Paul says that when Abraham received God's covenant promise, he weighed up all the adverse circumstances - "without being weakened in faith he considered his own body now as good as dead (he being about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb (Rom 4:19) - and yet concluded that the certainty of God's promise far outweighed all the negatives. In his hopeless situation Abraham hoped in God. That is why God counted his faith as righteousness (Rom 4:22).

d. Faith looks forward to the heavenly city.

11:13. The believers lived as strangers and pilgrims on earth.

"These all" were generally all the Old Testament believers, who died in faith without having received the fulfilment of God's promises, but who saw them by faith and greeted them from afar (11:39). "These all" were prominently Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who lived as strangers (ξενοι) and pilgrims (παρεπιδημοι) on earth (within the promised land)! They accepted their status as 'pilgrims' (Gen 23:4; 47:9)(cf. 1 Pet 2:11).

11:14. The believers sought a homeland.

The fact that they were still seeking a homeland (πατρος) is proof that they had not found it on earth (in Canaan). Canaan was not their home because they sought the country of their heart's desire.

11:15. The believers did not look backwards.

If they had thought of Mesopotamia as their true home (fatherland, motherland), they could have returned.

Abraham forbade his servant to bring Isaac to Mesopotamia (Gen 24:6).

Jacob fled from Esau to Mesopotamia, but his vision at Bethel on the first night of his journey there made it impossible for him ever to think of Mesopotamia as his home. Twenty years later "Canaan was the land of his fathers" (Gen 31:3), even if in it he had no settled abode.

11:16. The believers desired a heavenly homeland.

The true homeland they desired and sought was not on earth (not Canaan), but in heaven (the heavenly Jerusalem). The earthly Canaan and the earthly Jerusalem were temporary object lessons pointing to the everlasting 'rest' of all believers. 'The heavenly Jerusalem' is the city with foundations, of which God himself is the architect and builder (11:10), 'the better and heavenly country' (11:16), 'the spiritual mother' also of the New Testament believers after the first coming of Christ (Gal 4:24-27; Heb 12:22-24; 13:14), and which would become 'the new Jerusalem' after the second coming of Christ (Rev 21:1-2).

The Old Testament believers have a share in the same inheritance of glory as is promised to the New Testament believers. There is no spiritual warrant to make a distinction between the people of God in the Old Testament period and the people of God in the New Testament period.

e. The faith of the patriarchs until Joseph (11:17-23) about 'things to come' (11:20).

11:17-19. Abraham's faith concerning things to come.

Abraham offered.

Abraham, when 'tested' (Gen 22:1, his faith was tested) 'offered' (προσηννοχεν<προσφερω)(indicative perfect active) Isaac. The perfect tense may denote the completeness of the sacrifice so far as Abraham's resolution was concerned. He was 'offering up' (προσεφερεν)(indicative imperfect active). The imperfect tense indicates that, so far as outward action was concerned, the sacrifice was not completed by his death. Translate: "He was on the point of offering up".

His only begotten son (τον μονογενην).

i) This expression corresponds to the Hebrew 'jahid' (Gen 22:2), Greek 'beloved' (αγαπητος) and Symmachus: 'only' (μονος). The Hebrew adjective combines both ideas: 'only' and 'beloved'.

ii) Three times 'μονογενης' as 'only child' (Lk 7:12; 8:42; 9:38).

iii) John's application of this term to Jesus Christ (Jn 1:14,18; 3:16,18; 1 Jn 4:9) is practically synonymous with 'beloved' (αγαπητος) in Mark 1:11; 9:7 and 'chosen' (εκλεγμενος) in Luke 9:35.

iv) In the parable of the vineyard (Mk 12:6) the proprietor "had yet one, a beloved son" (ετι ενα ειχεν, υιον αγαπητον). "He did not spare his 'own' (ιδιος) son", in which the Greek 'ιδιος' represents the Hebrew 'jahid' as also in Acts 20:28: God purchased the church with the blood of his own", that is, "only begotten".

v) Isaac was unique and irreplaceable. This is the point of the expression: "only begotten". God said of Abraham about Isaac, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love" (Gen 22:2). Abraham had to sacrifice him!

Abraham's faith was concerning 'things to come'.

Abraham's faith was an assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen (11:11). He set an example of faith manifested in action. He demonstrated his faith in the promises of God. The counting of Abraham's faith to him for righteousness (Gen 15:6) preceded the sacrifice of Isaac by many years (Gen 22), but his sacrifice of Isaac showed how implicit was his faith in God's promise and in God's power to fulfil the promise, come what might.

Apart from his natural affection for his only son, *his problem was how the promise of God could be reconciled to the command of God.* Abraham treated this as God's problem. It was for God and not to Abraham to reconcile his promise and his command!

Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead. In Genesis 22:5 Abraham says to his servants, "The boy and I will go there and worship, and we will come back to you". The plain meaning of these words are that Abraham expected to come back with Isaac after he had sacrificed him. Thus he believed that God would raise him up from the dead!

Figuratively speaking Abraham did receive Isaac back from the dead. So far as Abraham's resolution was concerned, Isaac was as good as dead, and it was practically from the dead that he received him back when God stopped his hand in mid-air and forbade him to proceed further.

'In a figure' (εν παραβολη) he received him back from the dead, probably in a manner that prefigured the resurrection of Jesus Christ. John refers to this in John 8:56, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it; and was glad". These words in John 8:56 may also refer to Abraham's reply to Isaac, "God will provide for himself the lamb for the burnt-offering" (Gen 22:8).

11:20. Isaac's faith concerning things to come.

'Concerning the things to come' or 'in regard to their future' (περι μελλοντων). God reaffirmed his covenant promise to Isaac (Gen 26:2-5). When he learned that Jacob had received the blessing intended for Esau, Isaac did not revoke it, but rather reconfirmed it (Gen 27:33). He also blessed Esau, but not with a promise concerning 'things to come'. That is why the names Jacob and Esau are in the order they received their father's blessing. Like Abraham. Isaac believed God and his faith too was an assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen (11:1).

11:21. Jacob's faith concerning things to come.

God reaffirmed his covenant promise to Jacob (Gen 28:12-15; 32:12). He deliberately bestowed the greater blessing on Ephraim, the younger son of Joseph (Gen 48:14,19) and blessed them 'concerning things to come' as he himself had been blessed by Isaac. Thus, while Jacob's earlier career had been marked by anything but faith, as he endeavoured repeatedly by his own scheming to gain advantage for himself, yet at the end of his life he recognised the futility of all his scheming and relied on the faithfulness of God.

The statement that Jacob "worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff" is based on the Greek translation of Genesis 47:31. The Hebrew text says, "Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head (cf. 1 Ki 1:47), but the Greek text read the Hebrew 'mittah' (bed) as though it were 'matteh' (staff).

11:22. Joseph's faith concerning things to come.

Joseph manifested faith throughout his life in his steadfastness under trial and his patience under unjust treatment. Apart from his first 17 years, he had spent his whole life (120 years) in Egypt. He too regarded himself as 'a stranger and pilgrim', because at his deathbed he spoke of the future exodus of Israel from Egypt and gave instructions that his bones be taken along back to Canaan (cf. Ex 13:19; Josh 24:32).

f. The faith of Moses (11:23-28).

11:23. Moses' parents' faith concerning things to come.

While the Hebrew text says that his mother hid him, the Greek text says that his parents hid him (LXX Ex 2:2, verbs are in the plural). They did not fear the king's edict but acted by faith, because they saw he was "no ordinary child" (εἶδον ἀστέιον τὸ παιδίον). The word 'ἀστέιος' can mean 'beautiful or well-formed', but here it means 'acceptable or well-pleasing'. It does not refer to the external appearance of the child, but that there was something about this child which indicated that he was no ordinary child. He was a child destined under God to accomplish great things for his people.

11:24-28. Moses' faith concerning things to come.

Jewish legends concerning Moses.

These magnified the achievements of Moses far beyond the biblical account.

- Josephus (Antiquities) enlarges Moses' outstanding wisdom and exceptional beauty of stature (2:230f) and describes a victorious expedition which he had led against the Ethiopians as Egyptian commander-in-chief (2:238f)(cf. the film 'The Ten Commandments').
- Philo (Life of Moses 1:20ff) credits Moses with proficiency in arithmetic, geometry, poetry, music, philosophy, astrology, and all branches of education.
- Eupolemus (a Greek Jewish writer) makes Moses the inventor of the alphabet, which the Phoenicians acquired from him, and the Greeks from them.
- Artabanus (a Greek Jewish writer) says that Egypt owes her civilization to Moses.
- Stephen (Acts 7:22) says that Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action. When Moses was 40 years old, he avenged the murder of an Israelite and thought that his people would realise that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not (Acts 7:25).

11:24.

By faith Moses refused status.

The writer of Hebrews reads the narrative of Moses as Stephen did, and concludes that, by his identifying himself with the downtrodden Israelites, Moses renounced the status which he enjoyed in Egypt as a member of the royal household. "By faith he 'refused' or 'denied' or 'said no' (ἠρνήσατο<αρνεομαι)(indicative aorist medium) to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter".

11:25.

By faith Moses chose ill-treatment.

He 'chose' (ἐλομενος<αἰρεω)(participle aorist medium) rather than enjoy the transient (lasting a short while, Mt 13:21) 'pleasures' or 'enjoyments' of sin (ἀμαρτίας ἀπολαύσιν). If Moses had chosen to remain at Pharaoh's court and use his influence there on behalf of the Israelites instead of renouncing his Egyptian citizenship and becoming a member of the oppressed group without political rights, he would have 'sinned' (that is. would have missed God's purpose for his life)! He would have clearly seen God's path for him and yet turn away from it, that is, he would have committed apostasy, the sin against which the Hebrews were so emphatically warned (6:4-6)!

11:26.

By faith Moses regarded his disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value.

The 'disgrace' or 'stigma' (τὸν ονειδισμόν τοῦ Χριστοῦ) that rested on God's Anointed (Christ) was far more valuable than the temporal wealth of Egypt.

- i) God's firstborn is in reality Christ. The words which the God of Israel put in the mouth of Moses when he went to demand his people's release, "Israel is my son, my firstborn" (Hebrew: beni bekori Jisrael)(Ex 4:22) are as applicable to

Jesus personally as they were to Israel corporately (cf. the people of God are the Body of Christ: the Head of the Body is Christ, and He is the Son of God; the members of the Body, the believers, are the sons or children of God).

ii) The disgrace or stigma that rested on Christ. The implication is that the Messiah recapitulates in his own experience the experiences of his people:

- "In all their (Israel's) distress he (the Saviour) was distressed (Isa 63:9).

- "Out of Egypt I called my son" (Mt 2:15; Hos 11:1).

- Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus about his departure or 'exodus' (εξοδος)(Lk 9:31).

- "The insults of those who insulted you have fallen on me" (Rom 15:3; cf. Ps 69:9).

By faith Moses looked ahead to his reward.

His eyes were 'fixed' (απεβλεπεν<αφοραο)() just like the eyes of an artist are fixed on his 'reward' (μισθαποδοσιαν) (NEB: on the coming day of recompense - the city of God).

11:27.

By faith Moses left Egypt.

The Hebrew text says, "Moses feared that his deed of killing an Egyptian had become known. So he fled (wayyibrah, Greek φευγω)". The Greek translation says, "Moses does not flee (φευγω) from Pharaoh, for then he would have run away (απεδιδρασκω) without returning, but 'withdraws' (αναχωρω), like an athlete taking an interval to regain his breath (Leg. Alleg 3:14). The writer to the Hebrews does not intend to contradict the Hebrew text of Ex 2:15, but rather interprets it. The fear of Moses was not connected directly to his flight. Moses was afraid, but that was not why he left Egypt. His leaving Egypt was not an act of fear, but an act of faith! "By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the anger of the king; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible".

The word 'left' (κατελιπεν) denotes physical departure as well as heart renunciation (Lk 5:28). By faith he discerned that God's timing for him and for Israel was yet in the future. He resolutely turned his back on the course he began to take (violence and killing an Egyptian), backed away to Midian in order to enter at God's time and in God's way! *By faith Moses realised that it would be harder to live for his people than to die (as a martyr) for his people!*

By faith Moses persevered because he saw him who was invisible.

He 'was strong and held out' or 'persevered' (εκαρτερησεν<κερτερεω)(indicative aorist active). Moses paid more attention to the Invisible King of kings than to the present visible king of Egypt. His faith was a conviction of things not seen and above all a conviction regarding the unseen God (cf. 11:6)! The secret of his faith and perseverance was his awareness of the presence and power of the unseen God, and believing obedience to his word.

The writer to the Hebrews again emphasises to the Hebrews that the real and permanent order is the invisible and eternal order of the heavenly Jerusalem with Jesus Christ as High Priest and not the visible, but transient order which Judaism enjoyed up to the destruction of the earthly Jerusalem and temple in A.D. 70 (cf. Gal 4:21-31).

11:28.

By faith Moses instituted the Passover as a perpetual memory.

The word 'kept' or 'made' (πεποιηκεν)(indicative perfect active). The perfect tense means, "He has left us the institution of the Passover" or "He instituted the Passover and it became a perpetual institution". The 'pouring' or 'sprinkling' (προσχυσις) of the blood on the doorframes prevented the destroyer from touching 'the firstborn' (τα πρωτοτοκα) of Israel (Ex 12:21-23). Elsewhere in the New Testament Jesus is depicted as the antitype of the paschal lamb (Jn 19:36; 1 Cor 5:7), but the writer to the Hebrews does not stress this point, because he did not want to detract from the correspondence between the death of Jesus and the annual sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (9:11-15,23-26).

g. Faith at the Exodus and settlement in Canaan (11:29-31).

11:29.

By faith Israel crossed the Red Sea.

It was the faith of Moses that eventually stimulated the faith of the Israelites to cross the Red Sea. Whether the Red Sea was deep and all Israelites crossed "as on dry land" or whether the Red Sea was shallow and "the whole Egyptian army was 'drowned' or 'engulfed or 'swallowed' (κατεποθησαν<καταπινω)(indicative aorist active) in it, it remains God's miracle!

11:30.

By faith the wall of Jericho fell.

This historical record of faith is then suspended for 40 years, because it was a period of unbelief and God as displeased with that generation (3:7ff). The historical record of faith is resumed with the entry into Canaan. It was primarily Joshua's faith that moved Israel to faith. By faith they marched around Jericho for 7 days and on the 7th day after the 7th time around the city, the blast of ram's horns, they shouted with a great shout and the wall fell (επεσαν<πιπτω)(indicative aorist active) down flat (Josh 6:20). God could have used an earthquake or any other means, but it was by the power of their faith that Jericho was overthrown. By this same faith other Jericho's both large and small, can still be overthrown (2 Cor 10:4f).

11:31.

By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish together with the disobedient.

She welcomed the spies of Israel with: "Peace (shalom) be upon you or upon your house" (Lk 10:5f). She expressed her faith in the God of the bible (Josh 2:11). Her act of faith is commended (Js 2:25). She was not 'destroyed together with' (συναπωλετο<συναπολλυμι)(indicative aorist medium) the disobedient. She became the ancestress of king David and of Jesus Christ (Mt 1:5).

h. The faith of judges, kings, prophets and others (11:32-38).

11:32.

The faith of judges, kings and prophets.

Gideon by faith conquered the Midianites (Jud 7:7ff).

Barak by faith conquered the confederate chariot orce (Jud 5:19). His unwillingness to go out unless Deborah went along may be the expression of faith, not seeking his own glory, but God's.

Samson by faith conquered the Philistines. He was deeply conscious of the invisible God and his call to be an instrument in God's hand against the enemy (Jud 14:4).

Jephtah by faith conquered the Transjordan Ammonites (Jud 11).

David did much by faith (cf. 2 Sam 12:13; 24:10-14).

Samuel did much by faith. In his time we first meet the prophetic guilds (1 Sam 10:5,10f; 19:20).

11:33.

The faith of others.

- They 'after struggling against' kingdoms 'subdued' or 'overcame' (κατηγωνισατο<καταγωνιζομαι) them.

- They 'worked effectively' or 'wrought' or 'practised' righteousness or justice (ηργασαντο<εργαζομαι) (within the areas under their control).

- They 'obtained' (επετυχον,επιτυχανω) promises (cf. Act 13:23).

- They 'stopped' or 'blocked' or 'fenced in' (εφραξαν<φρασσω) the mouths of lions (Dan 6:22).

11:34.

- They 'quenched' (εσβεσαν<σβεννυμι) the power of fire (Dan 3:18).

- They 'escaped' (εφυγον<φευγω) the edge of the sword: Elijah was delivered from Jezebel (1 Ki 19:2ff); Elisha from Jehoram (2 Ki 6:31ff). Jeremiah from Jehoiakim (Jer 36:19,26).

- From weakness they were made strong: Gideon was the least in his family's house and his family was the poorest in Manasseh (Jud 6:15), but God made him strong: he waxed mighty in war and turned armies of aliens to flight.

- They became mighty in war, that is, they believed that the battle was not theirs but God's (2 Chron 20:15).

- They put foreign armies to flight - 'made them bend' (κλινω). So one of them chased a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight (Dt 32:30; Lev 26:8; Josh 23:10). Believers knew that "God can save by many or by few (1 Sam 14:6).

11:35.

- Women received their dead by a resurrection (11:35). The widow of Zarephat (1 Ki 17:17ff) and the wealthy woman of Shunem (2 Ki 4:17ff).

- Others were 'tortured' (ετυμπανισθησαν<τυμπανιζω), not accepting their deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection. This peculiar form of torture indicates being stretched on a rack and then beaten to death. This happened to Eleazar (2 Mac 6:19,28).

11:36.

- Others experienced (had trial) of mockings and scourgings ... bonds and imprisonment.

Jeremiah was beaten and put in stocks (Jer 20:2). He was made a laughing stock by members of society and by his own family. Later he was beaten again and put in prison (Jer 37:15) and the thrown in a muddy cistern (Jer 38:6ff).

11:37.

- They were stoned (ελιθασθησαν<λιθαζω)(indicative aorist passive). According to tradition Jeremiah was stoned to death by the Jews living in Egypt and Zechariah was stoned to death by Joash (2 Chron 24:21).

- They were sawn in pieces (επρισθησαν<πριω)(indicative aorist passive). According to tradition this was the fate of Isaiah during the reign of Manasseh. He was sawn in two with a wooden saw. "The Martyrdom of Isaiah" says, "Isaiah neither cried aloud nor wept, but his lips spoke with the Holy Spirit until he was sawn in two".

- They were tempted (επειρασθησαν). This was probably a false double writing: 'επρισθησαν' was the original and 'επειρασθησαν' was accidentally miswritten and then added.

- They were slain with the sword. Uriah by Jehoiakim (Jer 26:23). James by Herod (Act 12:2). *By faith one lived (11:34) and by faith the other died (11:37)!* James was killed, but when Herod tried to do the same with Peter he failed and Peter escaped.

11:37-38.

- They went about (περιηλθον<περιερχομαι)(indicative aorist active) in sheepskins and goatskins: cf. Elijah (2 Ki 1:8) and John the Baptist (Mt 3:4).

- They were 'destitute' or 'suffered lack' (υστερουμενοι), 'afflicted' or 'put under pressure' (θλιβομενοι), 'ill-treated' or 'mishandled' (κακουχομενοι), 'wandered' (πλανωμενοι) in desolate places and sought shelter in caves (The

godly Jews who fled from persecution under Antiochus Epiphanus, Dan 11:33). They were outlawed as people who were unfit for civilized society. The truth was that civilized society was unfit for them! (cf. Ps 44:22; Rom 8:36).

i. The vindication of faith comes with Jesus Christ (11:39-40).

11:39-40.

All of them 'commended' or 'attested by witness' (μαρτυρηθεντες) for their faith 'did not receive the promise' (ουκ εκομισαντο την επαγγελιαν). God 'foresaw' or 'exercised forethought' (προβλεψαμενοι) something better with regard to them.

Some of these received promises, but none of them received the promise in the sense of witnessing its fulfilment! They lived and died in prospect of a fulfilment which none of them experienced on earth. Yet the fulfilment was so real to them that they experienced the power to press upstream, against the current of their society or environment and to live on earth as strangers and pilgrims, but as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.

At the first coming of Jesus Christ, the promise has been fulfilled and the age of the new covenant has begun. God's plan was that the believers during the Old Testament period would not 'reach their destined perfection' or 'reach their complete goal' (τελειωθωσιν) before the believers of the New Testament period. Believers of the Old Testament period and the New Testament period together now enjoy unrestricted access to God through Jesus Christ as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.

God's better plan, embraces the better hope, the better promises, the better covenant, the better sacrifices, the better and abiding possession and the better resurrection (7:19,22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:35). That is the true heritage of the believers!