

The Book of Hebrews

מֵאַנֶשׁ מִנֶּמָּה דָּא מִן תִּּ אֶקְלָא
צִמְאָלִל נִתְּאֲתַצְרַח דְּרִתְסֵנִי סָק
אֵת פִּקְלָא תִּ סֵנִי סֶרְבָּאֵל
רֵר תֵּא סֶה תֵּאקְסֵנִי דִּמְמַצ
תֵּאֲתַפְלֵשׁ נִ תִּרְדֵּנָה רִפְרִי נִ רִלֵּד
תֵּאֲנֵשׁ רִלֵּד מִלְּלַצ סֵס תִּלֵּשׁ



Outline of Hebrews

“Jesus is Better”

- I. Jesus Is Better Than the OT Prophets (1:1-4)
- II. Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)
- IV. Jesus' Priesthood Is Better Than the Levitical Priesthood (4:14-10:18)
- V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)**
- VI. Epilogue: Final Exhortations (13:1-25)

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V. Concluding Exhortations and Warnings (10:19-12:29)

- A. Exhortation to Draw Near, Hold Fast, and Encourage One Another (10:19-25)
- B. Warning: No Hope of Forgiveness for Those Who Turn from Christ (10:26-31)
- C. Call to Persevere in Faith (10:32-12:3)
 - 1. Don't Abandon Confidence but Persevere in Faith (10:32-39)
 - 2. The "Hall of Faith" – Description and Examples of Persevering Faith (11:1-12:3)
- D. Exhortations to Readers to Endure (12:4-29)

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2. The “Hall of Faith” – Description and Examples of Persevering Faith (11:1-12:3)
 - a. Prologue: The Nature of Faith (11:1-3)
 - b. The Faith of Those Prior to the Flood (11:4-7)
 - c. The Faith of Abraham and His Heirs (11:8-22)
 - d. The Faith of Moses and Those Entering the Land (11:23-31)
 - e. A Closing Catalog of Faith (11:32-40)
 - f. Run the Race Looking to Jesus as the Supreme Example of Faith (12:1-3)

The Faith of Those Prior to the Flood (11:4-7)

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- Noah's "***faith***" illustrates a willingness to believe that when God ***promises*** something he will ***certainly*** bring it to pass.
- Like ***Abel***, Noah was "***a righteous man***"; and like ***Enoch***, he "***walked with God***" (Gen 6:9).
- But what is emphasized ***here*** is that when God announced that he would do something ***unprecedented*** in the lifetime of Noah and his contemporaries, Noah took God at his word, and began making practical preparations for the day when that word would come true.
- God told Noah that a flood would cover the entire earth.
- Such a catastrophe had never been known before, but Noah's ***faith*** gave him the "***conviction of things not seen***" (cf. Heb 11:1).

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- The building of an ark far inland must have seemed **absurd** to Noah's neighbors; but when the flood occurred, his faith was vindicated and the unbelief of those in the world around him was **condemned**: "*by this [act of faith] he condemned the world*".
- Noah paid careful attention to God's instructions and began to prepare the means by which he and his household would be kept safe when the flood came.

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- And God, seeing Noah's faithful response to his warning, said to Noah": "*I have seen that you are **righteous** before me in this generation.*" (Gen 7:1)
- And so Noah became a living example of the truth the author previously cited from Habakkuk 2:4 : "*my **righteous** one shall live by faith*" (see Heb 10:38).
- Therefore the author says here, "*Noah... became an heir of the **righteousness** that comes by faith*" –

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- In other places in the New Testament:
 - The flood of Noah's day is an ***illustration of sudden judgment***, a foreshadowing of the second coming of Christ (Cf. Matt 24:37-39; Luke 17:26ff).
 - Noah's safe passage through the waters which overwhelmed others is a ***figure of Christian baptism*** (1 Pet 3:20ff).
 - Noah himself is described by Peter as a "*herald of righteousness.*" (2 Pet 2:5)

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- But what the author emphasizes **here** is Noah's **faith**, and it cannot be said that our author had to look far to discover faith in the Old Testament story of Noah.
- Noah is the first person in the OT to whom the great gospel terms “*righteousness*” and “*grace*” are applied, and the quality of his “*faith*” was proved by his prompt obedience: “*Noah ... did all that God commanded him.*” (Gen 6:22).
- And so Noah becomes another example of what God expects from us!

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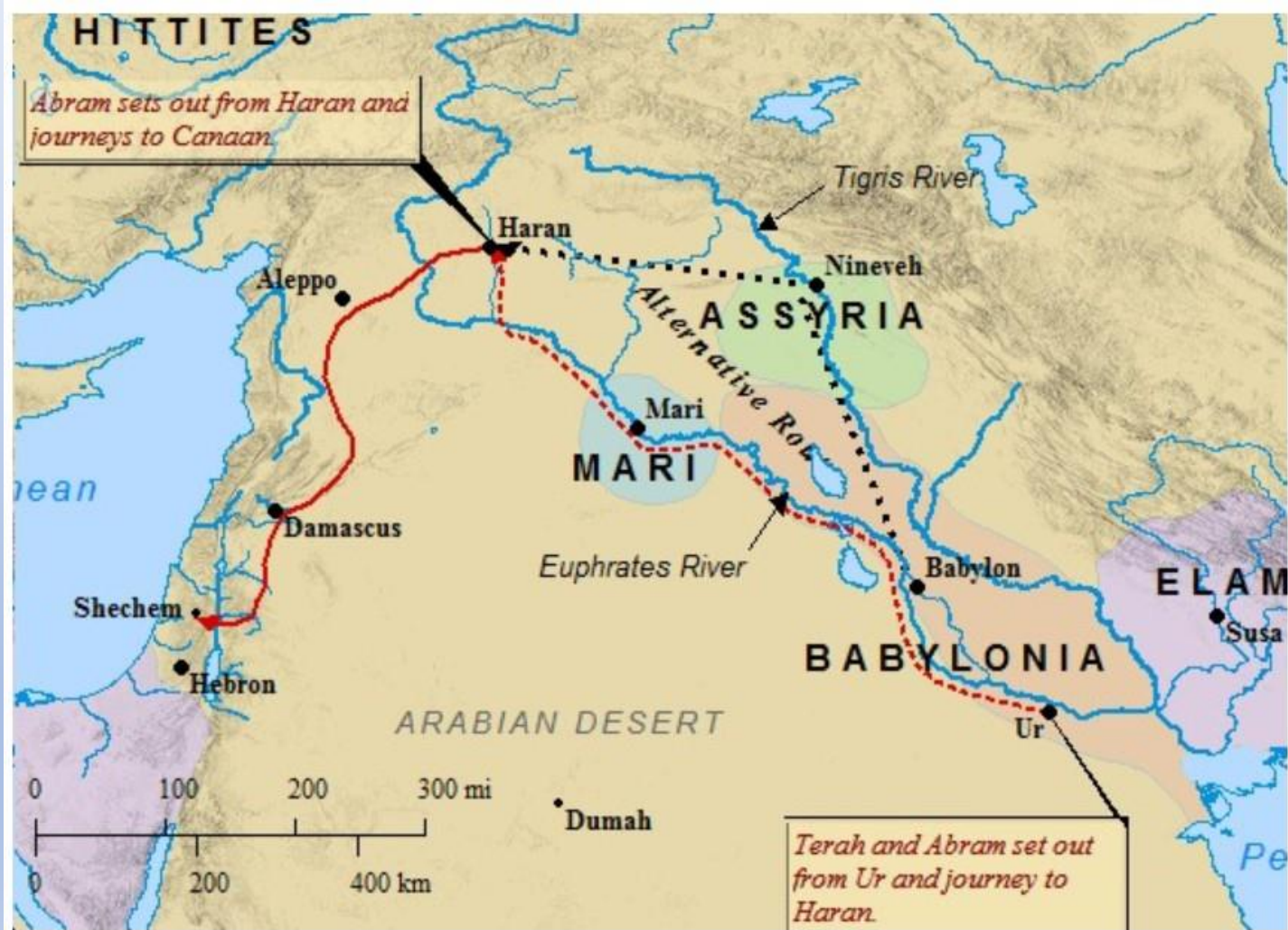
The Faith of Abraham and His Heirs – Part 1 (11:8-12)

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.

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.*

- The author now gives an extensive discussion of the greatest example of faith in the Old Testament: Abraham the patriarch.
- Verses 8–12 focus on **two** foundational events from Abraham's life that show **evidence** of his faith.
- **First**, Abraham obediently followed God's call to move to a place with which he was unfamiliar (see Gen 12:1-9).
- Abram's father, Terah, originally had taken his son Abram and his family from Ur of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran, **intending** to go to Canaan (Gen 11:31).

Terah and Abram's Journey from Ur to Haran



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.***

- In Haran the Lord appeared to Abram and said:
 - *Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.* (Gen 12:1-3)
- Abraham then **demonstrated** his faith by **obeying** God, even though he was completely unfamiliar with the land to which he was going.
- This thought continues a theme introduced earlier in this letter: that faith consists of acting with **conviction** on the basis of things which are **yet unseen** (cf. Heb 11:1).

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.*

- Abraham's **second** expression of faith, in which his son Isaac and grandson Jacob **also** participated, was his "*living in tents*" – that is, in **temporary dwellings** and transient circumstances – in the very land the Lord had promised to give his offspring as their inheritance.
- The patriarchs' movement and pitching of tents at various sites in the "*land of promise*" is something we see over and over in the Genesis narrative (Gen 12:8; 13:3, 12, 18; 18:1; 26:25; 33:18-19; 35:16-21, 27).
- Abraham's offspring would eventually receive the entire land as an inheritance, but for Abraham himself, his residence there was "*as in a foreign land*."

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.*

- Even when Abraham saw the land with his own eyes (Gen 13:14-17), his actual possession of it remained a reality “*not yet seen*,” perceived only by faith.
- His alien status was most evident when his wife, Sarah, died and he needed to negotiate with Hittites to obtain a burial place for her.
- In making his request, Abraham acknowledged, “*I am a sojourner and foreigner among you*” (Gen 23:3-20), a confession to which our author will later allude (Heb 11:13).

¹⁰ *For he was **looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.***

- The author draws a striking conclusion from the fact that Abraham lived out his days as a stranger in the very land God had promised as his inheritance.
- Abraham was waiting for the “*city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.*”
- In general, tent-dwelling is **temporary**, whereas living in a “*city*” in a building with “*foundations*” is **stable and secure** (Ps 105:12-17; 107:4-7).
- Our author takes that contrast to a higher level when he speaks of “*the city*” that Abraham was “*looking forward to*” and describes it as designed and constructed by God himself.

¹⁰ *For he was **looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.***

- There is an OT Psalm (Ps 87:1) which celebrates Mount Zion in Jerusalem, and alludes to the **security** of its “*foundations*”.
- But there is **another** Psalm (Ps 137:7) where the writer laments the **razing** of Jerusalem to its (manmade) “*foundations*”.
- Abraham’s hope was focused on a city which, unlike any manmade city (like Jerusalem) was **indestructible** because the living God both designed and built it (cf. Rev 21:9-26).
- Earlier in this letter, a citation from Psalm 102 described the eventual destruction of the **present** heavens and earth (Heb 1:10-12; cf. 12:26-28).

¹⁰ *For he was **looking forward to the city** that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.*

- The **heavenly** sanctuary in which Jesus now ministers was “*not made with [human] hands*” (Heb 9:11, 24), so it cannot be touched by the ravages of decay or destruction.
- Abraham’s hope looked **beyond** Canaan and Jerusalem, which his offspring would eventually occupy, to the **ultimate** city of refuge— a “*lasting city*,” still to come even for believers today (Heb 13:14)— in a better, **heavenly** country (Heb 11:16).

¹¹ *By faith **Sarah** herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.*

- Sarah and Rahab (Heb 11:31) are the only two women mentioned by name in the Hebrews “Hall of Faith.”
- Additionally, the statement “*Women received back their dead by resurrection*” (Heb 11:35) refers to the mothers whose young sons were raised by Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:18-37).
- Most versions, including the ESV, present Sarah as the one exercising faith, but commentators are divided over whether Abraham or Sarah is the subject of verse 11.
- The NIV, for example, translates this verse: “*By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.*”

¹¹ *By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised.*

- It might seem problematic to hold Sarah up as an example of faith given that Sarah laughed, apparently in unbelief (and then later lied about it), when told of the promised birth of a son (Gen 18:9-15).
- However:
 - The author speaks of the **true** faith of Sarah **despite** her failings.
 - Sarah apparently later had a change of heart, as her laughter became a genuine expression of joy at the birth of Isaac (Gen 21:6), whose name means “laughter.”

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.*

- Therefore from this one man Abraham, when he was already “*as good as dead*” as far as the hope of founding a family was concerned, there sprang a host of descendants.
- This was in fulfilment of the divine promises that his Abraham’s descendants would be as numerous as the “*stars of heaven*” (Gen 15:5; 22:17) and “*the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore*” (Gen 22:17).

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.*

- *“As good as dead”* is the same expression the apostle Paul uses when he says that Abraham, on receiving the promise of God, weighed up all the adverse circumstances and *“did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was **as good as dead** (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb.”* (Rom. 4:19).
- Instead he concluded that the certainty of God's word far outweighed them all.
- *“That is why,”* adds Paul, *“his faith was counted to him as righteousness”* (Rom 4:22); and the author of Hebrews is in full agreement.

Class Discussion Time



*Class Discussion Time

- Noah trusted what God said concerning an unprecedented event that no one had seen to that point: a worldwide flood.
- What kind of things does God's word tell **us** that people in **our** world find absolutely unbelievable?
- Abraham lived in tents (a non-permanent dwelling), even while living in the land God had promised him, because, the author of Hebrews tells us, he was looking forward to a "**lasting city**" – a heavenly one.
- While we may not live in tents, Jesus has commanded us to have a similar outlook towards the things of this world when he says, "***Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.***" (Mat 6:19-20)
- Of course, all of us enjoy physical possessions. But given the example of Abraham and given what Jesus says in Mat 6, what should be our outlook towards the things we possess?