

# Hebrews

## The Power and Certainty of Faith

### Hebrews 11:11-12

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#### CONCLUSION:

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#### INTRODUCTION:

Today we remember the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Jesus rode into the city on a young donkey one week before His assassination on the cross. People were throwing palm leaves and robes in front of Him and shouting "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel."

I asked myself, how can I tie this into our passage of scripture from Hebrews this morning? I soon realized that the final week of Christ could only have happened because of the promises of God and the extreme active faith of God's people to believe in those promises throughout the history of mankind.

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

##### **Hebrews 11:11-12 (NASB95)**

<sup>11</sup> By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. <sup>12</sup> Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, *as many descendants* as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

#### Prayer

Abraham and Sarah were unable to conceive children. God promised them not only a son, but also **nations** of descendants. Moses records the covenant that God made with Abraham and the promises that came with it.

##### **Genesis 17:1-8 (NASB95)**

<sup>17</sup> Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. <sup>2</sup> "I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly."

<sup>3</sup> Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, <sup>4</sup> "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you will be the father of a multitude of nations. <sup>5</sup> "No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.

<sup>6</sup> I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. <sup>7</sup> I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. <sup>8</sup> I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land

of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

### **Genesis 17:15-17 (NASB95)**

<sup>15</sup> Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name. <sup>16</sup> I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother of nations*; kings of peoples will come from her.” <sup>17</sup> Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear *a child?*”

There seemed to be an insurmountable problem. Not only had Abraham and Sarah been unable to conceive children, but they were both past the time in life when anyone normally could conceive.

The scriptures tell us that "**Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear *a child?*”**

Later we will read that Sarah laughed also. From a human perspective this seemed to be total nonsense! Yet they both trusted in God and, in faith, believed that He would keep His promise.

There are three lessons in these three verses:

### **BODY:**

#### **I. Faith Focuses on God’s Power and Faithfulness.**

Rather than focusing on human weaknesses, faith focuses on God’s power and faithfulness.

### **Hebrews 11:11 (NASB95)**

<sup>11</sup> By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.

Moses also recorded this event in Genesis.

### **Genesis 18:9-15 (NASB95)**

<sup>9</sup> Then they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” <sup>10</sup> He said, “I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. <sup>11</sup> Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. <sup>12</sup> Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have become 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 indeed bear *a child*, when I am so old?’ <sup>14</sup> Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” <sup>15</sup> Sarah denied *it* however, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. And He said, “No, but you did laugh.”

The Lord rebuked Sarah’s unbelief with the rhetorical question, “**Is anything too difficult for the Lord?**” He goes on to restate the promise, that at the appointed time the next year,

Sarah would have a son. She and Abraham rested on God's faithful character. Since He promised, He would do it.

We need to be careful in applying this. It is easy to misapply promises in the Bible out of their context, and then become disappointed when God doesn't do what ***we think*** He promised. The problem does not lie with God, of course, but with our misunderstanding of how to apply His promises.

For example, many Christians claim that if we have faith in God, He has promised to heal us from all our diseases. I have heard of these mistaken saints going to the bedside of a terminally ill Christian and accusing him of not having enough faith to be healed! That is cruel! God has not promised healing from every disease to those who believe. If He had, people of faith would live forever. I have never known of a faith healer that lived past 100! In fact, several prominent ones died relatively young!

At the same time, we would be wrong not to trust God to do far beyond our human abilities. **Nothing is impossible with God!**

### **Ephesians 3:20-21 (NASB95)**

*<sup>20</sup> Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, <sup>21</sup> to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.*

## **II. Faith Trusts God to Keep His Word in His Time.**

Rather than focusing on answers from a worldly perspective in this life, faith trusts God to keep His word in His time.

### **Hebrews 11:12 (NASB95)**

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, *as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.**

What did Abraham get **in this life** for his life of faith? He was uprooted from family and friends, never to see them again. If he had a house in Ur or Haran, it was his last. He lived the rest of his life in tents, moving from place to place. He lived to see Isaac, the son of the promise, born. He lived 15 years after the birth of Jacob, but he did not see any of Jacob's sons. He did not live long enough to get even a hint of the fulfillment of God's promise to multiply his descendants as the stars or the sand. The only piece of Canaan that he owned was a burial plot. Verse 13 states, he "**died in faith, without receiving the promises.**" As we have already seen, Abraham's faith was focused on eternity, not on this life only.

One of the most important lessons in the school of faith is to learn that God's time is not our time. Although Abraham lived for 175 years, God's promises were not fulfilled during his lifetime. He died with one son and two grandsons. That is hardly an innumerable nation! But from God's time frame, the true children of Abraham, those who believe in Abraham's seed (Christ) number in the billions! From our limited time frame, certain events do not fit with God's promises. But from His time frame, He who promised is faithful.

## **III. The Results of Our Faith Will Be Accomplished by God in Astonishing Ways.**

I want you to consider how God's promises were faithfully fulfilled in astonishing ways. We see the workings of God's grace very early in the Old Testament. The gospel did not start with the life and death of Jesus but goes all the way back to Genesis when God spoke to the serpent that had caused mankind to sin.

### **Genesis 3:15 (NASB95)**

<sup>15</sup> And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

This declaration by God set up everything that we read in the scriptures. Mankind had to be preserved and Christ had to have victory over Satan on the cross.

Were it not for the righteousness of Noah, God might of annihilated mankind.

### **Genesis 6:5-8 (NASB95)**

<sup>5</sup> Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. <sup>6</sup> The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. <sup>7</sup> The Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.” <sup>8</sup> But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

### **Genesis 6:14a**

<sup>14</sup> Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood;

### **Genesis 6:18-22 (NASB95)**

<sup>18</sup> But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. <sup>19</sup> And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every *kind* into the ark, to keep *them* alive with you; they shall be male and female. <sup>20</sup> Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every *kind* will come to you to keep *them* alive. <sup>21</sup> As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather *it* to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them.” <sup>22</sup> **Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.**

Noah, by faith, had to do many things. He built an ark in the middle of a desert on dry ground. It took him 120 years to complete it as he was being ridiculed by everyone who knew him. But the amazing thing is the events that occurred by God in order to keep his covenant with Noah.

God brought all the animals to Noah two by two. Except for the unicorns, The Irish Rovers tell us "Then Noah looked out through the driving rain Them unicorns were hiding, playing silly games Kicking and splashing while the rain was pouring. Oh, them silly unicorns."

"The ark started movin', it drifted with the tide Them unicorns looked up from the rocks and they cried And the waters came down and sort of floated them away And that's why you'll never seen a unicorn to this very day." (Although I couldn't find this in scripture.) ☺

So God brought animals. He caused it to rain for the very first time on earth. It rained so hard and so long that it flooded the earth for the very first time killing all life outside the ark. He caused the ark to rest safely upon a mountain.

It took Noah's faith and God's faithfulness of His promise and covenant to prevent mankind from being wiped out. This allowed mankind to continue to dwell on the earth and accomplish God's will.

Then came Abraham. God made a covenant with him and promised him that he would become the father of many nations. He was told that he would have...

**Hebrews 11:12b (NASB95)**

*...as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.*

God also promised...

**Genesis 12:2-3 (NASB95)**

*<sup>2</sup> And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; <sup>3</sup> And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."*

In order for all of this to happen, God had to allow Abraham and Sarah to have a son. His name was Isaac. Isaac had to be preserved in order for Abraham's descendants to multiply. This required that God furnish a ram caught in a thicket by his horns when Abraham was obeying God's command to sacrifice Isaac.

Through Abraham's descendants came Moses. He was saved from the river Nile and was raised by Pharaoh's daughter. He killed an Egyptian and fled from Egypt. But God still had a plan for him. He was told to go back to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to free His people from slavery and tell him to let My people go. He was reluctant at first and suggested to God that he was the wrong person to do the job. But God persisted and Moses, by faith, did as God instructed him to do.

Consider all of the things that God had to do to have his people freed from pharaoh and enter into the promised land.

He performed ten plagues through Moses in order to convince Pharaoh to let His people go. He led them through the wilderness with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He caused the sandals on their feet to not wear out and no one became incapacitated during the journey to the sea. He parted the waters of the Red Sea and allowed the Israelites to pass through on dry land. An angel of the Lord caused a pillar of cloud to come between Pharaoh's army and the Israelites to keep them separated. He allowed the waters to swallow Pharaoh's army and destroy them. He caused water to come from a rock in order to satisfy their thirst. He supplied manna and quail for their hunger. He allowed them to cross over into the promised land as promised. He fought many battles for them, such as Jericho.

All of this was done by the faithfulness of God to fulfill his promises through the faith of a few. Isaiah had prophesied that the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah.

**Genesis 49:10 (NASB95)**

*<sup>10</sup> "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.*

But according to the law of Moses, nobody from the tribe of Judah could ever be a priest. However Christ had to be a priest in order to carry out his special work for God. So Christ had to be a priest by some other rule. And there was such a rule. Melchizedek was a priest although he was not from the tribe of Levi. And Melchizedek was a greater priest than anyone from Aaron's family. It was by that same rule that God appointed Christ to be our chief priest.

So God had to preserve the generations for Jesus to be born. Satan tried everything in his power to try to sever this genealogy in order to prevent the Messiah from coming to earth. These generations are recorded in Matthew and Luke. Matthew recorded the generations leading to Joseph, the father of Jesus. Luke recorded the generations leading to Mary.

### **Matthew 1:17 (NASB95)**

<sup>17</sup> So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

God also caused Jesus be born of a virgin.

### **Matthew 1:18-25**

<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. <sup>20</sup> But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us." <sup>24</sup> And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took *Mary* as his wife, <sup>25</sup> but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

When Jesus was born God prevented Herod from killing Him.

The Jews were conspiring to kill Jesus. There were many instances where God prevented Christ's death until the time was right. Jesus completely fulfilled all of the prophecies concerning the Messiah. He accomplished the will of God and lived a sinless life in order to become our salvation.

## **CONCLUSION:**

## **ILLUSTRATION:**

I wonder how I would react if God were to tell me that, in my old age, I was going to become president of the United States. Because of your presidency the United States is going to repent and return back to Me.

Even if I knew for certain that it was God speaking to me, I wonder if my reaction might be like the reaction of nonsense like Sarah or even Moses. "God, I am tired and would not have the energy that would be required for me to be President. I know very little about politics and have no passion to "learn of" or "deal with" all of the corruption that surrounds

the presidency, or to deal with all of the national problems that exist, let alone to deal with all of the potential wars and problems in the world."

Would you say, like Moses or Sarah, "God, I think you have the wrong person here. I am ready for the recliner, not the presidency!" Or would I say, "OK God! You are in control! Let's go!"

What you do not know are the extraordinary events that God will do to accompany your act of faith. Remember God said that this would happen **because** of my presidency. It might mean that I run for president, select my vice president and become elected. My presidency might only last for thirty days before I am assassinated but the vice president that I selected was a very powerful Christian leader. The backlash on my assassination caused the public to turn against the group that killed me which set up the vice president to proclaim the Gospel and he turned their hearts toward God.

You see, God always keeps His promises. You will not know in what direction it will take or even if you will experience it in your lifetime you but can be certain that God will work through you because of your faith in ways you cannot even imagine to accomplish His will and keep His promises.

So you ask, how does all of this fit into the triumphal entry? Well, God had to be faithful to fulfill all of His covenants and promises. Everything that we have talked about today had to occur in this precise way in order for God's will to be accomplished and for the final week of Christ's life to begin with a triumphal entry, to end on the cross, and have Him raised from the dead. God had planned it all from the very beginning. He knows the beginning and the end of everything that will happen on this earth.

The story of the triumphal entry is one of contrasts, and those contrasts contain applications to believers. It is the story of the King who came as a lowly servant on a donkey, not a prancing steed, not in royal robes, but on the clothes of the poor and humble. Jesus Christ comes not to conquer by force as earthly kings but by love, grace, mercy, and His own sacrifice for His people. His is not a kingdom of armies and splendor but of lowliness and servant hood. He conquers not nations but hearts and minds. His message is one of peace with God, not of temporal peace. If Jesus has made a triumphal entry into our hearts, He reigns there in peace and love. As His followers, we exhibit those same qualities, and the world sees the true King living and reigning in triumph in us.

**What a Day That Will Be!**