

SERIES: HEBREWS CHAPTER 11**HEROES OF FAITH****LESSON #2****“WE ”****Hebrews 11:3**

“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”

If God would update the list of those who are examples of faith in Hebrews chapter eleven, would He include you? He already has, for if you believe the truth in v.3, you are included! *“By faith we understand”*. Those of us who believe God’s account of creation are in good company along with the Old Testament notables mentioned in the chapter.

Hebrews chapter eleven contains the records of many men and women who are remembered because of their responses of faith in obedience to God speaking to them. There are great acts of faith recorded here as a witness and encouragement to us.

However, the greatest challenge to our faith is not the exploits by the humans recorded here in Hebrews eleven. Perhaps the greatest challenge to our faith in the entire Bible is here in Hebrews 11:3 where we are told that this earth upon which we live was spoken into existence! And it is by faith that **we** understand this tremendous truth.

“After all the acts of faith which have ever been exercised in this world, perhaps there is none which is really more strong, or which requires higher confidence in God, than the declaration that this vast universe has been brought into existence by a word!” (Albert Barnes)

It is more than interesting to me, and certainly not incidental or coincidental, that God the Holy Spirit caused the statement in Hebrews 11:3 to be placed exactly where it occurs. This verse is the vestibule through which we must pass to gain entrance into the great Hall of Faith, where pen-portraits of men and women of faith hang on the walls.

It is as if God tests our faith to see if it is of the genuine quality necessary to receive the accounts of faith exercised by mere mortals in ages past. There are some great feats of faith recorded here. However, if we do not and cannot, by faith *“understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God”* (v.3), then we will not and cannot accept by faith that:

- the earth was destroyed by a flood in Noah’s day;
- that an elderly couple, Abraham and Sarah, became parents of a baby when they were both near 100 years old;
- that a pathway was made through a sea for a pedestrian nation to escape slavery;
- that the walls of a city came tumbling down after 7 days of circuitous marching;
- that a long-haired, blind man could pull down a colossal building on his enemies;
- that a man could sleep among lions without harm, or
- that the dead could be raised with a word!

Truly marvelous acts of faith indeed! However, these most challenging faith ventures pale into relative insignificance in view of the faith-challenge in v.3. For if we can believe the greater, that God created the worlds out of nothing by speaking, then all other miraculous accomplishments are believable. So, the greatest challenge to faith is inserted at the top of the list of faith events here in Hebrews eleven. Let us examine it more closely.

“BY FAITH WE UNDERSTAND”

Hebrews 11:3

“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”

Faith is not a leap into the dark, as some non-biblicists have asserted. Faith is based upon facts - facts of God's truth that are revealed in His Word.

Psalms 119:169 says, *“Give me understanding according to Your word.”* Here in Hebrews 11:3 we have the statement, *“By faith we understand.....”*

Faith gives understanding. By believing God's record we have knowledge. What is the knowledge that Faith imparts to us according to this verse? It is knowledge about the **Creator** and His **Creation**. Hebrews 11:3 introduces us to two of the greatest subjects that confront us. These two subjects are the cause of endless debate. The two subjects are **The Creator** and **The Creation**. Let us consider them in that order.

FAITH AND THE CREATOR

Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

ILLUST. Richard Dawkins is Professor of Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University and one of the world's leading skeptics concerning Christianity and belief in God. He is well known as an adversary to all forms of religious belief and of Christianity in particular.

His book, *The God Delusion*, is causing quite a stir. He writes, *“If this book works as I intend, religious readers who open it will be atheists when they put it down.”* In his opening chapter, he argues that *“most legitimate scientists--indeed all who really understand the issues at stake--are atheists of one sort or another.”*

I would say that anyone who believes what Dawkins has written is reading the wrong book! Evolution is called “theory.” Creationism is not referred to as “theory”. Creationism is based upon Divine Revelation and in Hebrews 11:3 God reveals how He created the universe.

There is a continuing battle between the truth of Intelligent Design of the universe and the erroneous theory of Darwinian Evolution. Evolutionists believe the theory that the universe evolved from some pre-existent cosmic matter. Creationists believe the truth of Genesis 1:1 *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*

One view adheres to Divine Revelation and the other to Scientific Theory; A supernatural event verses natural evolution. For creationists, it comes down to this premise: "Is there a God?" and "How powerful is God?" Heb. 11:3 and Genesis 1:1 answer these questions.

The Personhood Of God

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Heb. 11:3) and Genesis 1:1 *"God created...."* Here is evidence of Personhood. This is of paramount importance for we must determine at the outset whether creation is the result of an Eternal Person or the result of an Evolutionary Process.

Genesis 1:1 says, *"God created."* Consider some of the traits of Personhood related to those two words:

- He has a will because He decided to create;
- He has intelligence because He designed the universe;
- He has power because He created;
- He has wisdom because the universe is orderly, evidence of a wise Creator.
- He speaks. In Genesis 1:3 *"God said"*; in Hebrews 11:3 *"the worlds were framed by the word of God"*. God is a Person; persons speak.
- He has awareness. Genesis chapter one:
 - v. 4 *"God saw"* – 7 times in chapter 1 we read *"God saw."*
- He acted. Again, Genesis chapter one:
 - v. 4 *"God divided"* (light from darkness)
 - v. 5 *"God called"* - light "day" and darkness "night."
 - v. 7 *"God made"* - the firmament;
 - v.17 *"God set"* - sun, moon and stars in the heavens;
 - v.22 *"God blessed"* .

In addition Hebrews 11:6 uses 4 personal pronouns in reference to God: *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."*

What are we to conclude from this evidence? At least 3 truths:

- (1) There is a God;
- (2) He is a Person;
- (3) He is wise. His wisdom is seen in the symmetry, functionality and beauty of His creation.
- (4) He is powerful. Think with me about the power of God:

The Power Of God

"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." (Heb.11:3)

If we are going to have Bible faith, we must know that God, the object of our faith, is a Powerful Person, not an Impersonal Force! Nowhere is His power more evident than in His creation. Furthermore, His power is such that with a spoken word He brought this vast universe into existence. What a mighty God we serve!

Illust. “All that we see of the works of creation, were brought into being by the command of God. God, by His word, called all things into existence. He speaks, and the thing is. We feel that this is worthy of God; for, when once God is brought in, all is simple. Shut Him out, and man is lost in the efforts of his own imagination.” - Matthew Henry

The demonstration of the awesome power of God recorded in Hebrews 11:3 and Genesis 1, is not to be passed over lightly. This is how the universe came into existence and this knowledge is derived only from faith and not from fiction, science, or our own reasoning.

Perhaps all of us have no doubt recited the Apostles Creed at one time or another. The first sentence of the Apostles' Creed reads, *"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."* Why does the Apostles Creed make that statement? It is based upon what Scripture says: *"the worlds were framed by the word of God"* (Heb. 11:3)

We, as people of faith, can believe with the Psalm writer that: *"By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."* (Psalm 33:6-9)

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the greatness & power of God in relation to the universe in question form: *"Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?"* (Isa. 40:12).

The weight of scripture leaves no doubt, in the minds of persons of faith, that the universe is the result of the Almighty, All-wise Creator-God. He has but to speak and the universe comes into existence. What awesome power He has!

Jeremiah said it as follows: *"He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens at His discretion."* (Jer. 10:12)

FAITH AND THE CREATION

Hebrews 11:3

"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible."

Biblicists believe that where there is design there is a Designer; where there is effect there is a First Cause; where there is order there is an Orderer. This is called Intelligent Design. Intelligent Design is highly criticized by evolutionists for if there is Intelligence behind creation, the theory of evolution collapses.

Let us now concentrate on the creation truths in this verse: *"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."* Consider first,

The Creation Mandate

"...the worlds were framed by the word of God"

The universe is not eternal. Neither did it produce itself, but it is the result of the creative mandate of God! Hebrews 11:3 that tells us how God created – He spoke! Seven times in Genesis chapter one, we read the words, "God said" and a creative result immediately followed:

v. 3 "God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light."

v. 6 "God said, "Let there be a firmament"

v. 9 "God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear."

v.11 "God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth."

v.14 "God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night."

v.20 "God said, "Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures."

v.22 "God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas."

v.24 "God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind."

Peter writes of those who scoff at the biblical account of creation: *"it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed"* (II Peter 3:5)

And, Psalm 33:6 declares that: *"By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."*

Based on these verses and many more like them, the person of faith has the knowledge that this universe was spoken into existence. Therefore, it is no surprise to us that when we come to the New Testament and read that Jesus, with a word:

- calmed the sea (Mark 4:39-41);
- with a word raised Lazarus and others from the dead (John 11:43);
- with a word killed a fig tree (Matt. 21:19);
- with a word forgave sins (Matt. 9:2)

then we have no difficulty in believing, for that is just like our great God!

Faith looks not only forward to the end of the world, but backward to the beginning of the world. The same faith that believes what God says about the creation of Heaven, the eternal home of the children of God, also believes what God says about the creation of the world!

The Creation And Matter

".....things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

This statement places God prior to the visible universe. The statement that *"things which are seen were not made of things which do appear"* takes us back as far as it is possible to go. It takes us back to eternity past when there was only God.

Secular history does not go back to the pre-creation era and inform us about it. God asks

Job a question that could be asked of all humans of all times, whether theists or atheists, creationists or evolutionists: "*Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?*" (Job 38:4)

Our knowledge on the subject of creation rests on the divine testimony of the only One Who was present at creation. His testimony in Heb. 11:3 predates Gen. 1:1. Therefore, the genuineness of our faith, the quality of our faith, the strength of our faith is tested right here in Hebrews 11:3.

This statement informs us that the universe was not made out of pre-existent matter. The truth in Hebrews 11:3 destroys the theory of the eternity of matter and thus destroys the basic premise of the evolutionary theory. Evolution begins with already existing matter and proceeds from there. It teaches that everything evolved from "something" already in existence and from that the universe eventually evolved.

Furthermore, Genesis 1:1 tells us the same thing that Hebrews 11:3 tells us and that is that God created the universe out of nothing. It is very interesting that the Hebrew word translated "created" in Gen. 1:1 is *bara'* = "to create, make."

"This verb is of profound theological significance, since it has only God as its subject. Only God can "create" in the sense implied by *bara'*. The verb expresses creation out of nothing. God brought the object or concept into being from previously nonexistent material. *Bara'* is a rich theological vehicle for communicating the sovereign power of God, who originates and regulates all things to His glory." (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)

Of *bara'*, the Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament, says the Hebrew word means "the production of that which had no existence before".

Evolutionists are famous for saying, "*out of nothing, nothing can be made.*" That is because they exclude God from their calculations. Genesis 1:1 and Hebrews 11:3 exposes their ignorance!

Albert Barnes adds his voice in his commentary as follows: "The visible creation was not molded out of pre-existing materials, but was made out of nothing. The materials of the universe, as well as the arrangement, were formed by God, and that all this was done by a simple command. We must exercise strong confidence in Him who had power to create the universe out of nothing. If this vast universe has been called into existence by the mere word of God, there is nothing which we may not believe He has ample power to perform."

All unbelievers, and even many who call themselves Christians, do not recognize the truth of Luke 1:37 that "*with God nothing will be impossible.*" Yes! Out of nothing, something can be made – look around you!

However, there is something that *is* impossible: "*It's impossible to please God apart from faith.*" (Heb.11:6) Now "**WE**" understand! Are you included in the "**WE**" in Hebrews 11:3 ?

SUMMATION

Let us conclude this brief study by reading some scriptures that underscore the greatness of God and that encourage our faith:

Psalm 8:1-4:

“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?”

Ps 19:1 *“The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.”*

Isa 45:18

“For thus says the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.”

John 1:1-3 *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”*

Colossians 1:16-18 *“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”*

One's faith is only as good as the object in which faith is placed. The Bible invites us to personally put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Acts 4:12 says, *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*

EXTRA - OPTIONAL

That not everyone believes the biblical account of creation is no surprise to us. There have been many alternative creation stories promulgated down through the centuries and even in our own times. Some of the ancient myths regarding the beginnings of the world are:

The Hindu myth called “The Golden Egg”, says that All was god - and that he was the entire universe. From this egg emerged the primeval being with a thousand thighs, a thousand feet, a thousand arms, a thousand eyes, a thousand faces, and a thousand heads.

The Chaldean myth says that there was darkness and water, filled with monstrous creatures, and ruled by a woman. The sun god Bel divided the darkness, and cut the woman into two halves, of which he formed the heaven and the earth; he then cut off his own head, and from the drops of blood men were formed. – (According to Berosus and Syncellus)

The Phoenician myth, the beginning was a movement of dark air, and a dark, turbid chaos - slime, was formed, from which every seed of creation and the universe was developed; and

the heavens were made in the form of an egg, from which the sun and moon, the stars and constellations, sprang. By the heating of the earth and sea there arose winds, clouds and rain, lightning and thunder, the roaring of which wakened up sensitive beings, so that living creatures of both sexes moved in the waters and upon the earth.

Buddhism acknowledges no God as creator of the world – it teaches no creation, but simply describes the origin of the world and the beings that inhabit it as the necessary consequence of former acts performed by various beings.

These are only some of the fanatical fabrications of the faithless accounts of the origin of the universe. God's account of the creation differs as greatly from these mythical accounts as truth differs from fiction.

These and all other fictitious accounts of creation, including that of evolutionists, have several notions in common:

- the origin of the universe sprang from some primeval matter;
- there was some mystical causative substance or force;
- there was some natural chaos;
- they rule out the biblical account of creation.

These mythical ideas do not reflect the existence of a powerful God as the Creator of all things. Why is this? Some are ignorant because they have not heard the truth about the Person and Power of God. Some have willfully rejected the scriptural account of creation, because if it is admitted that an All-powerful, All-wise Person existed prior to the existence of the universe, then it must be admitted that that Person created the universe!

Hebrews 11:3

"By faith **we** understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible."

Are you included in "**WE**"?

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