

ABRAHAM IN THE HALL OF FAITH CHAPTER

In what is termed the great Hall of Faith Chapter (Hebrews 11), included is the example of Abraham. In fact, he has the longest section in Hebrews 11 extending from verse 8 through verse 19.

Hebrews 11:8 (NKJV)

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

The first thing mentioned about Abraham's faith in Hebrews 11 is that it **obeyed**. By faith Abraham obeyed. This was not "blind faith". Rather it was an obedient response to divine revelation. Biblical faith is always attached to the Word of God – to God's revelation.

We are not sure exactly how God called Abraham but Stephen in Acts 7:2 states that "***The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia before he dwelt in Haran***".

"The word *obeyed* means Abraham immediately obeyed. The Greek text has a present participle which means that action occurred at the same time as the main verb: while he was being called, Abraham obeyed immediately." – **Arnold Fruchtenbaum**

Genuine faith obeys – not perfectly, not always, but characteristically.

Paul refers to a saving faith as "***the obedience of faith***" (cf. Rom. 1:5, 16:26). Jesus told the Jews of His day, "***If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.***" (cf. Jn. 8:39). Jesus warned, "***Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.***" (Matt. 7:21). John said, "***by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.***" (1 Jn. 2:3). And James said that a faith without works is dead (cf. Ja. 2:26).

Abraham had a faith that obeyed. This is the kind of faith that saves. Abraham does not model a dead faith but a living faith that responds. This is the consistent pattern of saving faith throughout the Bible.

We believe Abram was about 70 years old when he received this initial call at Ur (cf. Gen. 15:7; Neh. 9:7; Acts 7:2-4). Immediately he left his home in Ur and went to Haran (in modern day Turkey) where he remained for a few years until his father died.

At age 75 he then moved on from Haran to the promised land of Canaan (cf. Gen. 12:4). The point of verse 8 is that by faith, solely in the revelation of God, Abraham obeyed and went out. God said to go, and he went, not even knowing where he was going. Faith takes God at His Word as illustrated in the obedient response of Abraham.

Hebrews 11:9 (NKJV)

9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;

Once Abraham got to the Promised Land he dwelt there by faith. He lived like a resident alien dwelling in tents as did Isaac and Jacob who were also heirs with him of the same promise.

The point is that Abraham had the promise that this land would be his, but he did not take possession of it. To look at him you would have thought he had no claim to this land. In fact from the time Abraham left Haran at age 75 until he died 100 years later at the age of 175, the only property that he ever owned in the Land of Promise was the burial plot that he purchased in order to bury his wife Sarah (cf. Acts 7:5, Gen. 23).

He lived in tents showing that he led a nomadic lifestyle. This was a very transitory existence where one was consistently on the move. Nothing was permanent. Everything was temporary. Everything was changing – nothing was stable.

He believed that he would possess this Promised Land eventually but for his whole lifetime he dwelt in the land by faith. All he had to go on was faith because to look at it - it didn't appear that it was going to be his. He didn't yet possess what God had promised, but he took it by faith.

Hebrews 11:10 (NKJV)

10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Abraham clearly believed that the physical land of Canaan would ultimately be his and that of his descendants as promised. And it will be (cf. Matt. 8:11). But beyond this Abraham had an eternal perspective in which he saw the ULTIMATE PROMISED LAND which is a special **city**. Somehow the Promised Land on this earth is going to segue and merge with the eternal state and the heavenly city which further revelation reveals to be the New Jerusalem.

This eternal place was the secret behind Abraham's patient endurance of abiding faith.

Abraham was prophetically shown many things in one form or another. For example, in John 8:56 Christ said, "**Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.**" We know that Abraham saw the coming of Christ prophetically but on what occasion and in what detail we are not told. Perhaps he saw it in the promised seed that would become a channel of blessing to the entire world (cf. Gen. 12:1-3). Perhaps he saw it more specifically in the form of some special revelation that is not recorded in Scripture.

In like manner here we find that Abraham looked for a specific PLACE. He looked for THE CITY with THE FOUNDATIONS that is built by God Himself. How did Abraham know about this city? Well, God had promised him the land forever (cf. Gen. 13:15, 17:8) and it is suggested that Abraham may have by faith surmised that by default this must involve a place beyond this temporal world, because nothing here is eternal.

However, in view here is not just "the land" but rather a very specific "**city**". How would Abraham know about this specific special eternal city? I submit to you he could only have known it by special REVELATION. That is the consistent basis of faith. We know what we know because God has revealed it and we take Him at His Word. We take God at His Word for that which we cannot see or touch. True faith always connects with God's revelation.

Somehow, in some way, God very specifically revealed to Abraham about this ULTIMATE dwelling place and Abraham believed God. Again, faith is not based on surmising but on specific revelation. Faith is taking God at His Word that He has clearly revealed.

This city is described as having PERMANENT foundations in contrast to the temporary tent dwellings of this life. What holds up a tent is pegs, rope, and poles – all of which are very flimsy and not permanent.

In contrast the city that Abraham waited for has FOUNDATIONS which will last forever because God is the builder and maker of it. The New Jerusalem is truly "**the eternal city**".

Builder is the idea of being the architect – the One who designs it. **Maker** is the One Who constructs it. So, God both designed and built this city. This city is referenced again in verse 16 and then again in Hebrews 12 and 13 (cf. 12:22-24; 13:13-14). In other words, Abraham realized that everything that he saw here was temporary but by faith he looked for that which is ultimately eternal as promised by God.

My friends live with an eternal perspective – it's what FAITH is all about as demonstrated in the life of Abraham!