

Have you ever wondered why some expressions of FAITH are more effective than others? When you consider that there are many different “Faith” communities, or to put it differently, there are many different Religions, “WHAT KIND OF FAITH DOES GOD ACCEPT?” Even within Christianity, there are some who appear to have their prayers answered more often than others, even though on the surface they both are passionate for the Lord.

In chapter eleven, the writer of the Book of Hebrews is giving us a number of examples of why faith is necessary to please God, and what that faith truly looks like.

We have been spending a number of weeks looking at the SUPERIORITY of JESUS over every aspect of other faiths. Today I want to show you:

WHY FAITH IN THE SUPERIORITY OF JESUS IS COMMENDED?

I am going to spread this message over at least three weeks because there is so much in these verses.

v1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. v2 This is what the ancients were commended for. v3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. v4 By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. v5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. v6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. v7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. Hebrews 11:1-8

BEFORE WE CAN SEE WHY FAITH IN THE SUPERIORITY OF JESUS IS COMMENDED, WE NEED TO:

1. DESCRIBE WHAT FAITH IN THE SUPERIORITY OF JESUS LOOKS LIKE:

The Writer of the Book of Hebrews highlights a number of the HERO'S OF FAITH that had gone before and how what they did that points to the SUPERIORITY OF JESUS

1.1 ABEL HAD A SACRIFICE DEFINING FAITH

v4 By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.

This verse is a very brief description of what Abel did that was different from Cain when he brought his offering. A fuller account is found in *Genesis 4:1-9*

v1 Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. v2 Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. v3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. v4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favour on Abel and his offering, v5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. v6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? v7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." v8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. v9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Four elements of Abel's offering point to the SUPERIORITY OF JESUS:

1.1.1 **ABEL'S OFFERING POINTED TO A LAMB** – When Jesus first started out on his earthly mission, he came to be baptised by John the Baptist. As he was approaching John, John made the following statement in *John 1:29* *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "BEHOLD, the **Lamb of God**, who takes away the sin of the world!*

The image of a Lamb is used all through Scripture to talk about Jesus. While Abel may not have known about Jesus while he was on earth, he prophetically acknowledged the role Jesus would fill.

1.1.2 **ABEL OFFERED THE "FIRSTBORN"** – Jesus is described as the "Firstborn" in nine different verses. He is the "Firstborn" of Mary. The "Firstborn" over all creation Col 1:15 – meaning the head of creation not the first created as JW's would want you to believe. Most importantly Jesus is the "Firstborn" from the dead, Rom 8:29, Col 1:18, Heb 12:23 and Revelation 1:5
"Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood"

1.1.3 **ABEL OFFERED "The Fat-Portions"** – The reason South Africans like to braai has a lot to do with the aroma which to a large degree is the smell that comes from the "Fat-Portions" as they are cooking. This same aroma is the smell that pleased God when people offered their sacrifices.

Leviticus 3:3-16 From the fellowship offering he is to bring a sacrifice made to the LORD by fire: all the fat that covers the inner parts or is connected to them, v4 both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, v9 If it is a lamb he is to bring a sacrifice made to the LORD by fire: its fat, the entire fat tail cut off close to the backbone, all

*the fat that covers the inner parts or is connected to them, v12 " If his offering is a goat, v14 ... all the fat that covers the inner parts or is connected to them, v15 both kidneys with the fat 16 The priest shall burn them on the altar as food, an offering made by fire, a pleasing aroma. **All the fat is the LORD's.***

The AROMA refers to Christ. we read in 2 Corinthians 2:15 "For we are to God **the aroma of Christ** among those who are being saved and those who are perishing."

- 1.1.4 **ABEL DIED BECAUSE HE SERVED GOD** - v8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

The death of Abel in a field as the first murder foreshadows the death of Jesus as prophesied in Jeremiah. Listen to this account following the suicide of Judas after he betrayed Jesus

*Matthew 27:6-10 The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money." v7 **So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field** as a burial place for foreigners. v8 That is why **it has been called the Field of Blood to this day.** v9 Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel, v10 and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."*

1.2 **ENOCH HAD A OBEDIENCE DEFINING FAITH**

v5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.

The phrase that most clearly defines Enoch is "HE WALKED WITH GOD AND WAS NO MORE". The Hebrew word for "walked" is "HALAK" and is used over 1300 times in the bible. It commonly defines the simple act of walking. HOWEVER, it also defines a "PERSON WHO IS LIVING BY FAITH." For example:

Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man who **does not walk in the counsel of the wicked** or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

Psalms 15:1-2 Lord who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? v2 He **whose walk is blameless** and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart

Psalms 26:3 for your love is ever before me, and **I walk continually in your truth.**

Obedience was one of the characteristics of the life of Jesus on earth.

- 1.2.1 **JESUS LEARNED OBEDIENCE** – We learned about this earlier in our study of Hebrews. We read in **Hebrews 5:8** “*Although he was a son, **he learned obedience** from what he suffered*”

He learned obedience as a child: - *Luke 2:51 Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.*

He learned obedience as our saviour: - *Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!*

- 1.2.2 **THE OBEDIENCE OF JESUS WON OUR SALVATION** – Because Jesus was obedient, the very opposite of Adam, he was able to cancel the sin of Adam in us. We read in: - *Romans 5:19 “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”*

- 1.2.3 **OBEDIENCE SHOULD CHARACTERIZE CHRISTIANS**
The same thing that defined Enoch’s life should define ours. Listen to what we read in *2 John 1:6 “**And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands.** As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that **you walk in love.**”*

- 1.3 **NOAH HAD A PROPHETIC DEFINING FAITH**
*v7 By faith Noah, when **warned about things not yet seen**, in holy fear **built an ark to save his family**. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.*

Noah foreshadows Jesus in being the person who provided the means by which his family was saved and who warned people about the future.

- 1.3.1 **THE ARK IS A SYMBOL OF CHRIST** –
1. The wood is a symbol of the cross.
 2. The family a symbol of the church.
 3. The 40 days a symbol of the Temptation.
 4. The dove a symbol of the Holy Spirit.
 5. The single door a symbol that Jesus is the only way.
 6. The shelter a symbol of Christ's covering.
 7. The rain a symbol of Baptism.
 8. The rainbow a symbol of promise.

There are other symbols but we must not push the analogy too far.

1.3.2 **THE FLOOD POINTS TO THE COMING JUDGEMENT**

Jesus himself drew this comparison. Listen to what he said in:

*Matthew 24:36-41 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. v37 **As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.** v38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; v39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. v40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. v41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.*

Noah was clear and so is JESUS!!!!

CONCLUSION

So today as we began this journey on discovering

WHY FAITH IN THE SUPERIORITY OF JESUS IS COMMENDED?

we have tried to begin to

DESCRIBE WHAT FAITH IN THE SUPERIORITY OF JESUS
LOOKS LIKE:

WE HAVE SEEN

1 THE FAITH OF ABEL AS A SACRIFICE DEFINING FAITH

2 THE FAITH OF ENOCH AS AN OBEDIENCE DEFINING FAITH

3 THE FAITH OF NOAH AS A PROPHETIC DEFINING FAITH

HOW WOULD SOMEONE DESCRIBE WHAT YOUR FAITH
LOOKS LIKE?

WHATEVER THAT MAY BE

MOST IMPORTANTLY

IS IT A FAITH IN THE SUPERIORITY OF JESUS?