

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Hebrews 11:1-3, 6

Psalms 46:1-3, 8-11

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, September 9, 2012

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, September 9, 2012**, is from **Hebrews 11:1-3, 6; Psalms 46:1-3, 8-11**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lessons Commentary* (formerly, *Bible Lesson Forum*) below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further** discuss the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **International Bible Lessons Commentary Index**. The weekly **International Bible Lesson** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at **<http://InternationalBibleLessons.org>** and in **[The Oklahoman](#)** newspaper.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Hebrews 11:1-3, 6

(Hebrews 11:1) Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Faith includes certainty regarding truths that people have good reasons to believe and trust. The Holy Spirit uses the truth of the Bible to inspire faith within us. God reveals truths to us through the Bible and the world around us, and the Bible explains why the world around us is not as God created it originally and what God intends to do to make it right (see Genesis through Revelation). Faith includes believing in truths, facts, or realities that we do not see yet. Faith believes the promises of God, and faith inspires us to hope that we will see fulfilled in our lifetime the promises of God when Jesus Christ comes again.

(Hebrews 11:2) Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval.

When we put our faith in God and choose to do the right and avoid the wrong, especially under the threat of persecution or martyrdom, we receive the approval of God and the approval of godly and knowledgeable people. When we choose to live by faith, as Abraham and Jesus lived, we do what is right and receive God's commendation. Whether we lose our life in His service or not, if we remain faithful, He will say to us, "well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

(Hebrews 11:3) By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

In Genesis, we learn that God created the world by speaking. John the Apostle further explained how God created by and through the Word, Jesus (see John 1). We cannot see spoken words, but instruments can transmit our speech and evaluate speech and spoken languages. We trust that God is able to and did create by “the Word of God” – Jesus, whom we do not yet see with our eyes.

(Hebrews 11:6) And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

If we do not believe God exists, and trust that God has spoken to us in the Bible, and live on the basis that God has truly spoken and His words can be trusted for us to follow, we call God a liar; we cannot please God when we do not trust Him. To pray rightly, we must believe that God exists and that He hears our prayers and that He will always do what is best in response to our prayers.

Psalm 46:1-3, 8-11

(Psalms 46:1) God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

When we have a living faith in God, at the first sign of trouble we go first to God; instead of going to God as a last resort. Likewise, when we think we will be tempted beyond our power to resist, we go to God; we trust the truth of the Bible to help us, and we trust that God will hear our prayers and help us the moment we go to Him.

(Psalms 46:2) Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

Since we trust in God’s love for us (and in His ability, power, and goodwill as the Creator of all that exists), when earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, and other natural disasters occur, we rely on God instead of becoming anxious and worried. Being scared by an unexpected event (at the very moment of an earthquake, for example) is a natural human response and not fear. Living in fear means living in a continual state of anxiety or worry. Living day-to-day in fear of what might happen may reveal lack of trust in God and His character as revealed in the Bible.

(Psalms 46:3) though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. [Selah]

Many people have experienced or have heard reports of more natural disasters in recent years than in all the years before. If we have not personally experienced

these disasters, through the media we have seen the foam and heard the roar of the sea and its destruction of lives and property; the same with earthquakes and volcanoes. Though these events may happen, we will continue to trust in God.

(Psalms 46:8) Come, behold the works of the LORD; see what desolations he has brought on the earth.

The psalmist labels the disastrous events we experience in nature as “the works of the LORD.” Many insurance companies have called these natural disasters “acts of God.” The Bible reminds us that insurance companies cannot take the place of God for the security we seek. We can choose to live in fear of natural disasters or desolations, or we can trust God and ask God to help us prepare for these events, protect us from them, or make a clear way of escape for us; just as God helped Noah before the great flood. As believers, if we lose our lives in a disaster, we go to the home that Jesus has prepared for us.

(Psalms 46:9) He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

God will sometimes use disasters to motivate people to turn to Him in faith, and to help them make the moral and spiritual changes they need to make. Sometimes these disasters lead to the making of peace; for example, God brought peace to His people after He sent the plagues upon the Egyptians and they let His people go. When Jesus the Messiah returns all wars will cease. Until then, God can still change the hearts of His enemies, people can still come to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as the gospel of Jesus Christ spreads around the world.

(Psalms 46:10) “Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.”

In the previous verses, the psalmist praised God and gave reasons for praising and trusting in God. God inspired the psalmist’s words of praise and we can use the psalmist’s words in praising God. Now, God speaks directly to us through the psalmist and tells us to be still or quiet so we can listen and think, so we can meditate on the truths we have learned about God, so we can know God better, so we can exalt God by what we say and do. Perhaps our exalting of God as we share truths about God (just as the psalmist did) will be heard or read about among all nations on earth, so more and more people everywhere will exalt the LORD.

(Psalms 46:11) The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. [Selah]

Increasing faith in God results from an increasing knowledge of God, and from the work of the Holy Spirit, Who applies and interprets truths about God as we think and examine the Bible, the world around us, and our own nature or character. The process of faith building results in the assurance that facts about God, God’s Word, the Bible, are true – which leads to knowing God better and

understanding God's way for us. Our knowledge of God gives us the assurance that God is with us, and we can always go to God with any of our needs and the needs of others.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What is the difference between "I believe God exists" and "I hope God exists"?
2. What is the difference between "I believe God exists" and "I believe God"?
3. Why is faith essential to pleasing God?
4. How is "faith" "the assurance of things hoped for"?
5. How can we exalt God among the nations today?

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