

Cloud of Witness.

Mike

Scriptures:

Hebrews 11 and 12

Revelation 5

Luke 16

2 Peter 1:16-21

Hebrews 12:1-2 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God.

There are many examples in the Bible where the chapter headings have been inserted in an inappropriate place, you may be able to recall various places where a chapter starts and what is said doesn't quite make sense, which can lead us to conclude that it means one thing and yet it is the intent of the writer to convey something quite different.

I think Hebrews 12:1 could be one of those places; it could suggest that our family and friends who have gone before us have been integrated into a cloud that watches with great interest over the earthly journey that has been set before us.

Until recently I used to think that this could be true, but why would you be more interested in the earthly life you have just left as opposed to "*the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*"? Surely our interest would be in the Father, and the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world as seen in Revelation 5.

"*Wherefore*", what does Hebrews 12:1 point us to if we look at this in context and understand that "*Wherefore*" means "as a result of." It follows that Hebrews 12:1 is the result of what has already been written, so, logically, we should look at Hebrews 11 to understand to what Hebrews 12 is referring.

Hebrews chapter 11 lists many Old Testament saints: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sara, Joseph, Moses, Israelites who left Egypt, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, David, Samuel, the prophets.

The "*great cloud of witnesses*", are actually the saints listed in Hebrews 11; they are the ones that testify to God's faithfulness that He is the One who will see them through all the trials of this life.

We need to remember that we are not the only ones, nor the first, to face the problems that life places before us every day, others have already participated in this race and have won the race. The testimony of these people encourages us to continue to run with patience and with our eyes fixed on our Saviour Jesus Christ.

In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Abraham confirms to the rich man that his brothers need to listen to Moses and the prophets, sending Lazarus would not achieve anything, they should follow the cloud of witness.

Peter understood the importance of witnesses, he was there on the Holy Mount, when Moses and Elijah appeared before Jesus. The two witnesses of Revelation representing the Law and the Prophets were standing before the beloved Son and welcoming in the New Covenant.

Peter says, "*I am not here to tell you myths and fables*".

He did not get his information from myths which are the inventions of man which tell fictional stories to try to explain the world. Peter says that what the Apostles have told about Jesus Christ is absolutely true because they were **eyewitnesses** of what they have reported. They were simply proclaiming what they had seen and heard.

“This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased’- and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the Holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.”

What Peter is proclaiming is not a myth or fairy tale. It is not the invention of men. It is something quite different, it's a foundation upon which we can rejoice and move forward with certainty in our daily walk, admiring and heeding the words of the Great Cloud of Witnesses that have gone before.

Prayer: Father God, thank You that Your Word is truth and life, truly a lamp shining in a dark place. In the Name of Christ our Lord we give You eternal thanksgiving. Amen