

Hebrews 11:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. This verse establishes faith as the foundation for understanding creation's origin. "Through faith we understand" (pistei nooumen, πίστει νοοῦμεν) indicates that comprehending creation requires faith, not merely scientific observation. Nooumen (νοοῦμεν) means to perceive, apprehend, grasp with the mind—creation's ultimate explanation transcends empirical investigation and requires trust in God's revelation.

"The worlds were framed" (katērtisthai tous aiōnas, κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας) uses katartizō (καταρτίζω), meaning to prepare, complete, perfect, arrange in order. "Worlds" (aiōnas, αἰῶνας) can mean ages (time) or worlds (space)—likely both, encompassing all created reality, temporal and spatial. God didn't merely form pre-existing matter but brought the entire universe—space, time, matter, energy—into existence from nothing.

"By the word of God" (rhēmati theou, ὥρματι θεοῦ) echoes Genesis 1 where God speaks creation into existence ("And God said..."). His word is efficacious—accomplishing what it declares (Isaiah 55:11). Creation wasn't accidental or evolutionary but purposeful, intentional, and immediate through divine fiat.

"So that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (eis to

μὲν ἐκ φαινομένων τοῦ βλεπόμενον γεγονέναι) affirms creation ex nihilo (out of nothing). The visible universe didn't evolve from pre-existing visible materials but was spoken into existence by God's immaterial word. This contradicts naturalistic materialism and affirms God's transcendence and omnipotence.

Historical Context

Both Jewish and Greco-Roman creation accounts existed in the first century. Genesis 1 taught creation by divine decree—God speaking everything into ordered existence from nothing. Greek philosophy (particularly Plato's Timaeus) proposed an eternal demiurge shaping pre-existing formless matter. Some Gnostic systems taught material creation as evil, produced by inferior deities. The author of Hebrews affirms the Genesis account against these alternatives: God alone created all reality by His powerful word, and creation is good because divinely ordained. For Jewish Christians, this verse grounded their faith in the opening words of Scripture they'd always trusted. The created order's design, beauty, and intelligibility testify to the Creator's wisdom and power (Romans 1:20, Psalm 19:1). Understanding this by faith means believing God's revelation about origins even when empirical science cannot demonstrate creation ex nihilo (which by definition involves pre-scientific, unrepeatable divine action). This verse also introduces the pattern throughout Hebrews 11: faith believes God's promises about unseen realities, whether future (salvation) or past (creation).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Why is faith necessary to understand creation, and how does this differ from blind faith?
2. How does belief in creation by God's word affect your view of Scripture's reliability and authority?
3. What implications does creation ex nihilo have for understanding God's power and sovereignty?
4. How should creation by divine word shape our understanding of human dignity and purpose?
5. In what ways does modern scientism conflict with the faith-based understanding of creation presented here?

Interlinear Text

Πίστει	νοοῦμεν	κατηρτίσθαι	τά	αἰῶνας
Through faith	we understand	were framed	that things which	that the worlds
G4102	G3539	G2675	G3588	G165
ρήματι	θεοῦ	εἰς	τά	μὴ
by the word	of God	so	that things which	not
G4487	G2316	G1519	G3588	G3361
τά	βλεπόμενα	γεγονέναι	ἐκ	φαινομένων
that things which	are seen	made	of	things which do appear
G3588	G991	G1096	G1537	G5316

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 33:6 (Word): By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

2 Peter 3:5 (Word): For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

John 1:3 (Creation): All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.

Romans 4:17 (Faith): (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

Revelation 4:11 (Creation): Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Acts 17:24 (Creation): God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

Hebrews 1:2 (Creation): Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Jeremiah 10:11 (Creation): Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.

Isaiah 40:26 (Creation): Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

Acts 14:15 (Creation): And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: