



[Hebrews 11:3](#)

(3) By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

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We have generally understood this verse to mean that the material creation, which we can clearly see, was produced from invisible spirit. It is certainly a possible meaning, but it is probably not its primary one. In his book, *Great Cloud of Witnesses* (pp. 12-14), E. W. Bullinger provides an alternative that appears more accurate and fitting within the context of Hebrews 11.

The word "worlds" is translated from the Greek *aion*, meaning "age," in the sense of a period of time or a dispensation. It derives from a root that means "continued," and it is used as "world" only when "world" gives a better sense of a period of time, not the physical creation. It could be used if one said "[the world](#) that then was" or "the world to come."

"Framed" also appears in [Hebrews 10:5](#), where it is more clearly and accurately translated "prepared." It means "to complete thoroughly," "to rule" (even "overrule"), or "to order" (by [God](#) in this case). "Word" is not *logos* but *rhema*, meaning "revealed words." Finally, "made" is *ginomai*, which means "to generate," "to cause to be," "to happen," or "to come to pass." It is not the word normally used to indicate God is creating.

Using these definitions, we could translate the verse as, "By [faith](#) we perceive by the revealed words of God that the ages were prepared, so that the things we see come to pass not from things that appear." Those of us who walk by faith know that a great Unseen Hand guides, indeed overrules, events on this earth. This verse means that the historical events we read of in God's Word were not chance occurrences, but God was working behind the scenes to bring His purpose to the conclusion He has foreordained. In short, it says, "God controls the march of history." The great men and women listed in

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Hebrews 11 lived their lives firmly knowing this [truth](#). That is why they could live in faith.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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