

Hebrews 11

ABEL

Hebrews 11:4

Introduction

Time of the Abel:	a. <i>Approx. 4004 BC - 3874 BC.</i>
Record of Abel's life	b. <i>Genesis 4:1-15</i>
Other Places Abel is Mentioned:	c. Matthew 23:35; Luke 11:51; Hebrews 11:4; Hebrews 12:24
Strength	d. A more excellent sacrifice
Lessons From Abel's Life	e. Offer your first and best sacrifices because life is short!
Key Verse	f. Hebrews 11:4

1. Abel was the first person in the Scriptures:
 - a. To die.
 - b. To die by murder.
 - c. To offer an animal sacrifice.
 - d. In Hebrews 11.
2. Abel's name - אֵבֶל hebel, Habel (Abel), "breath, vapour."
 - a. And his short lived life certainly matched his name. His name and life remind us of the brevity of our existence.
 - b. James 4:14 – For what was his life?
 - c. He died quickly under circumstances outside of his control!
 - o Psalm 39:5 - Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity [Hebel, Abel]. Selah.

The Offering: The Differing Views
The question is asked, "Why did God accept Abel's offering and not Cain's?"

- One group of Commentators suggest that Abel's offering was accepted because it was a blood *animal sacrifice* which God expected them to offer. This is based upon the assumption that God following Genesis 3:21 (coats of sin to cover their nakedness) set forth an example to Adam and Eve that He desired blood animal sacrifices and they passed that on to Cain and Abel. This pictured the great sacrifice of Christ. Cain was rejected because he offered the fruit of his hands, vegetables, and it was not a blood sacrifice. This marks the beginning of the two religions – that of Cain (works) and that of Abel (faith in the blood). Therefore Abel was righteous in the sight of God because of the blood sacrifice.
- The other group of Commentators suggest that there was no revelation given to Cain and Abel concerning offerings. Yet Abel was accepted instead of Cain because of the attitude and approach

seen in his offering. He offered *by faith*. He offered the “*of firstlings of the flock...*” This occasion of approach was not for a “sin offering” but rather an offering of thanksgiving unto God. God accepted bloodless offerings (Lev. 5:10-13; Lev. 2:1-2; Deut. 26:1-11) even considering them as “a sweet savour unto the LORD.” The meat [meal] offering was a bloodless offering of fine flour to which could be added oil, salt, and frankincense. In fact the Hebrew word for the “meat [food, meal] offering” is *Minchah*, which means a *gift*, and this is the exact same term used for the offering of Cain and Abel: Genesis 4:3 – “...Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering [Minchah] unto the LORD.”

1. In this subject (By Faith Abel) we will look at three things:

- A. The Sorrowful Story – Genesis 4:1-15
- B. The Splendid Sacrifice – Hebrews 11:4
- C. The Superior Saviour – Hebrews 12:24

Memory verse: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” Hebrews 11:4

A. The Sorrowful Story – Genesis 4:1-15

1. *His Birth* (vs. 1-2)

- a. Abel was the second son of Adam and Eve, and the brother of Cain.

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. (Gen. 4:1-2)

- b. Some have suggested that they were twins, because there is not time gap or the word “conceived” between the accounts of their birth. Even just bare (delivered) again!

“...And she again bare his brother Abel.” 4:2

2. *His Business* (vs. 2)

- a. Abel was a keeper of sheep – this was his profession and livelihood.

And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

Genesis 4:2

3. *His Brother (vs.2)*

- a. Cain which means, “*possession, acquisition*”

Genesis 4:1 “...I have gotten a man from the LORD.”

- b. Like his father Adam, Cain was a tiller of the ground.

4. *His Bereaving Death (vs.8)*

- a. Cain slew his brother whilst they were in the field.

And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

Genesis 4:8

B. The Splendid Sacrifice – Hebrews 11:4; Genesis 4:3-4

1. The Faithful Worship - “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” v4

What made the sacrifice of Abel more excellent than Cain’s?

- a. Abel offered “by Faith” – through the means of *faith* he presented his offering unto God.
Note: Cain offered **fruit** of the ground BUT Abel offered the **firstlings** of his flock **and** of **the fat** thereof. Genesis 4:3-4
- b. Cain’s sacrifice was the mere produce of the ground that was given as a gift to the Lord.
- c. Abel offered the FIRST and BEST of what he had. This is the expression of a faith-filled offering. This is the offering which God is well-pleased.
God wants the firstfruits!
- d. And if thou offer a **meat offering** [minchah] **of thy firstfruits** unto the LORD, thou shalt offer for the **meat offering** [minchah] **of thy firstfruits** green ears of corn dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears. Leviticus 2:14

- e. Honour the LORD with thy substance, and **with the firstfruits of all thine increase**: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. Proverbs 3:9-10
- f. And **in process of time** it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. Genesis 4:3- Lit. “the end of days, possibly of harvest”
- g. In the age and dispensation of conscience or in any age there would be no need for a revelation to tell Abel or Cain to offer the “firstfruits.” The nature of the human heart knows that we give the FIRST and BEST to the FIRST and BEST.

Bible Examples of those who offered their first and the best.

- David sacrificed that which was costly – “And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: **neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing.** So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.” 2 Samuel 24:24
- Hannah gave her FIRST and BEST – “And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, **but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life,** and there shall no razor come upon his head.” 1 Samuel 1:11
- The widows two mites - Mark 12:41-44 – “Her first and best”;
- Mary, in Bethany – “Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.” John 12:3 was that not her first and best?
- What about the Chief example of God giving Christ – HIS FIRST AND BEST – As a sacrifice, a gift – John 3:16;
 - He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Romans 8:32. Yes, true! But should not our reply be “how shall we not but freely give Him all things!”
- Abel gave his first and best. Genesis 4:4-5 “...And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect...” The LORD had respect unto Abel (his faith, his heart) and his offering (first and best); but unto Cain (his unbelief) and his offering (fruits of the ground) he had not respect. Can you see the close link between the offeror and his offering?

2. *The Faithful Witness* “...by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts:”

- a. God bear record of Abel and his offering calling him righteous.
- b. Even Jesus referred to him as “righteous Abel” – Matt. 23:35 “That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, **from the blood of righteous Abel** unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.”
- c. By his faith in God, which was demonstrated by his offering, he obtained a testimony of righteousness. Abel was righteous because of the attitude of faith and heart of faith. His faith was evidenced by works.

- d. God saw Abel's faith and he had a testimony that he was righteous. God bore record of his gifts – by having “respect unto Abel and his offering.” God sees your faith but He also sees your sacrifices.

3. *The Faithful Word “...and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”*

- a. Through Abel's example of faith, He being dead is still speaking.
- b. Can you hear that faithful voice? How valuable is God to you?
- c. Can you hear that faithful voice? Oh give Him the first and best?
- d. Can you hear that faithful voice? Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do do it with thy might?
- e. Can you year that faithful voice? Whatsoever ye do do it heartily as to the Lord!
- f. Can you hear that faithful voice? Without faith it is impossible to please him... approach God in faith...
- g. Can you hear that faithful voice? “Give of your best to the Master; Give of the strength of your youth. Clad in salvation's full armour, Join in the battle for truth?”

C. The Superior Saviour – Hebrews 12:24

1. *The Blood Speaks – Genesis 4:9-13*

- a. Abel's blood cried out from the ground unto the LORD.
- b. It cried: “vengeance! Vengeance! Innocent blood has been shed.”
- c. It cries: “Judgement upon the sin of Cain!”
- d. Yet in this passage it is contrasted with the blood of Jesus.

2. *The Blood Speaks Better Things (vs. 24)*

- a. The blood of Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant, speaks better things!
- b. The blood of Abel cries out to a Holy God, “Vengeance! Justice! Judgement!”
- c. However, the blood of Jesus cries out “Father forgive them for they know not what they do!” “Mercy! Forgiveness! Grace! Pardon and Peace!”
- d. “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him [Moses, Sinai] that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven...” Hebrews 12:25
 - i. The Son of God is greater than Moses. Don't refuse Him! For His invitation of mercy will soon expire...

Conclusion

- a. Abel's life was short-lived yet he offered a sacrifice by faith that still speaks. He calls us to offer the first and best faith-filled gifts unto God.
- b. *Look* at his faithful worship, *long* for the faithful witness, *listen* to his faithful word and be *lifting* up praise to God for the blood of Jesus which speaks better things than that of Abel!