

The Voice of Faith

Hebrews 11:4

By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks (Heb 11:4).

To understand the context of this verse we must first examine Genesis 4:1-8. We see seven scenes.

Scene 1 - The children's birth. (Genesis 4:1-2a)

- First born Cain. The Hebrew word means to acquire, get, or possess. When the child was born, Eve declared that her child was to be called Cain because she had acquired or gotten a man *from the Lord*. She thought the Lord had given her *the promised seed*, the very child who was to deliver humanity (Genesis 3:15).
- Second born Abel. The Hebrew word means vanity, breath, temporary, meaningless, or empty. Why would Eve name her second son Abel, a name that meant empty or meaningless?

Scene 2 - The work of Abel and Cain. (Genesis 4:2b)

- Abel was a herdsman and Cain a farmer. Their professions met the very basic needs of man: that of clothing and of food. Their chosen professions were honorable and contributed to meeting the needs of the family. They had learned their profession from their father.
- Remember, God Himself had shown Adam how to clothe his family with the skins of animals (Genesis 3:21), and God had instructed Adam to till the ground (Genesis 3:17-19, 23). As the father, he had apparently taught his sons to work diligently.

Scene 3 - The personal worship of Cain and of Abel. (Genesis 4:3-4)

- First, there was Cain's false worship: he approached God and offered produce—the works of his own hands—to God. Cain was a farmer, so he took what he had, produce, and he brought his produce as an offering to God. We can imagine that the produce was the very first of Cain's harvest and the very best produce he had.
- Second, there was Abel's true worship: he approached God and offered a sacrifice—a substitute life—to God. Abel approached God by taking the first—the very best—of his flock and sacrificing the animal and offering it to God.

Scene 4 – God's response to the worship of Cain and Abel. (Genesis 4:4b-5)

- The Lord looked upon Abel with favor and accepted his offering, but He looked upon Cain with disfavor. He did not accept Cain's offering. God did not only accept and reject the offerings; He accepted and rejected the man as well. It was the offering that made the man either acceptable or unacceptable to God.
- What was the sacrifice of Abel? The sacrifice of an animal: its life, its blood. through the sacrificial death of an innocent substitute. This, of course, pointed to Christ, *the promised seed* and Savior of the world (Genesis 3:15; Genesis 3:21).
- Cain wanted to use a different way and approach to God. For some reason, he brought the fruit of his own hands to God. He wanted God to accept him because of his hard work and because he worshipped and gave offerings to God. He did not place his faith in what God had instructed.
- Remember: Biblical faith is a confident trust in whatever God says is true & acting on it regardless of the circumstances or consequences.
- No person can earn, win, or merit salvation. No person can approach God through his own works, energy, efforts, fruits, ways, religion, ceremony, or ritual.

- God has never accepted anybody—Old Testament or New Testament, before Christ or after Christ—apart from the shedding of blood. The blood of the innocent life—the animal which pictured the coming Savior and His death—had to be shed for Old Testament believers. The blood of Christ Himself had to be shed for everyone through all the generations of human history.

Scene 5 – Cain’s reaction to God’s response – anger! (Genesis 4:5)

- The Hebrew is descriptive in picturing Cain's reaction: he burned with anger, ferocious anger, and his face and countenance fell and were downcast. Cain was also angry with his brother, filled with envy and jealousy towards his brother. Why? Because God had accepted and blessed the worship of Abel.

Scene 6 – God’s warning. (Genesis 4:6-7)

- Despite Cain's sin of false worship, of unbelief and apostasy, God was willing to forgive Cain. In fact, God wanted Cain to repent and to approach God through sacrifice. God was not willing for Cain to perish, not without God first reaching out. God longed for Cain to repent and to bring the right sacrifice, to approach God in the right way: by the sacrifice of an innocent life.
- Cain was silent. No response is mentioned. Apparently, he never responded to God. He chose to continue in his sin of false worship, of approaching God as he wished. He just continued to reject sacrifice as the only approach to God.

Scene 7 – Cain killed Able. (Genesis 4:8)

- **Genesis 4:8** Cain spoke to Abel, his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

Epilog – Abel still Speaks. (Hebrews 11:4)

- **He still speaks.** Abel still speaks to all generations of believers and potential believers. Able says three things:
 1. Man comes to God by faith, not works.
 2. Man must accept and obey God's revelation above his own reason and self-will.
 3. Sin is severely punished.
- This is Abel's three-point sermon to the world, which he has been preaching for thousands of years to those who will hear. It could be titled, "The Righteous Shall Live by Faith."

Application:

1. Faith listens to God.
2. Faith can never be silenced.
3. Faith rests in Christ alone and what He has accomplished.