



**N**OW faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.<sup>2</sup> For by it the elders obtained a good report.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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 11:1-4)

What a wonderful legacy does the person of faith leave behind after their transport from this life! Imagine knowing that your spirit-filled faith calls out from the dust of the grave as an everlasting testimony of the truth of God. But what are the tokens of faith evinced by Abel that echo throughout eternity? As with all Biblical truth, we do not take the mysteries revealed by God from isolated text, or those taken out of context, but in the full revealed Word of God in which every stone is perfectly fit together.

Abel was the first prophet of God and his means of sacrifice is evidence of his faith and understanding of the great need of a Redeemer.<sup>34</sup> *Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:*<sup>35</sup> *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.* (Matthew 23:34-35) Although his father, Adam, must have related the ordeal in Eden to his two sons after sin had cast the death shadow on all living, Abel seems to have had a knowledge of the Holy that exceeded any explanation Adam could have afforded. As with all prophets of God, mysteries of the Holy were revealed to Abel by means of the Holy Ghost.

Cain, being the first born, undoubtedly considered himself privileged in the first family. *"And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD."* Yet, Abel, the second-born, was a good son, obedient in labor and to the expectations of God. He labored six days out of seven attending his flocks in the open fields of the Lord. Cain, on the other hand, was a tiller of the ground and gathering all of the fruits of his labor from that resource. But the life of vegetables, fruit trees, and vines do not possess the red blood of life which constitutes an acceptable sacrifice. In fact, the ground was a medium that was cursed at Eden. *And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: **cursed is the ground for thy sake;** in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;* (Genesis 3:17)

God had established the shadowing plumb line for an acceptable sacrifice in the death of a perfectly innocent animal (likely a lamb) to provide skins to cover the nakedness (sin) of Adam and Eve. *Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.* (Genesis 3:21) The innocent animal, though the first to die on earth, was only the beginning of the sorrows of death upon every living creature. That creature was a prophetic example of a far greater sacrifice that had been foreordained from before the foundation of the world – the Lord Jesus Christ! This, Abel understood fully by faith in God's Word.

Abel labored daily in tending his flocks. He set an excellent example of the first good son. His livelihood was the preservation of life in his flocks. He was honest, kind, and loving. These characteristics reflected his reliance upon God as his Benefactor and Redeemer. Though the lifeblood of his sacrificial lamb was important to Abel, nothing was as important as a proper sacrifice to God who would one day sacrifice His only Begotten Son for the sins of the world. *And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear.* (Revelation 13:8-9) Well, Abel had ears of faith to hear. (see Hebrew 9:22) He knew the suitable sacrifice must be the firstlings of the flock just as Abel himself became the firstling to see death among mankind.

Cain was a son of perdition. Whether his character derived from the dark side of Adam, or the Serpent of the Tree, we cannot tell. But he was filled with rage and envy. He worked hard in producing, from the sweat of his brow, the products of the soil. He had not witnessed the great dangers Abel faced in defending his flock from wolves and other predators. He had not seen Abel in the labors of helping to birth lambs, or providing shelter for them. The only thing Cain's envious eyes beheld was the seeming leisure that Abel enjoyed while sitting alone keeping watch over his flock. "Why? What makes Abel so privileged when I must labor so painfully in the hot sun?" Cain may have asked himself. His heart was preparing itself for the fruit to which hate will always give way – murder! The visions that filled his eyes translated that hate to rage.

Now comes the day to offer an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord. *"And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD."* Gen 4:3. Cain was aware for the need of a blood sacrifice, but he was not into doing those things needful, but those things most convenient and proper in his own mind – like many modern Christians. Had he not labored long and hard for his harvest of grains? Cain considered his fruit every whit as valuable a sacrifice as Abel's lamb. Many today still

consider the best means of their own salvation to be through good works, bypassing the requirement for the all-important blood sacrifice made by our Lord. Cain would show Abel who is better at the offering!

Now Abel carefully selects the firstling of his flock for the offering. We are not told that Cain brought the first fruits of his cursed offering or not. Now Abel loved his lambs, but he loved his Lord more! *"And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering."* Gen 4:4. The Lord had respect to Abel's offering for two reasons – the first, Abel gave the proper offering of blood sacrifice; and, second, Abel gave out of a heart of love – he offered in the proper ATTITUDE!

Cain had brought an offering from the fruit of the ground – was the ground not cursed? (Gen 3:17) But, in Cain's logic, if the offering was good enough for Cain, it should certainly be good enough for the Lord. *"But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell."* Gen 4:5. Again, there are two reasons that God had no respect for the offerings of Cain: 1) Cain knew that a blood offering was required, but he chose his own kind of offering; and 2) Cain made his offering out of a sinful heart. He had a bad ATTITUDE! Cain could well be the author of the Sinatra song, *"I Did it My Way!"*

The sordid end of this story is known quite well by all: *And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. 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. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.* (Gen 4:6-10)

Jealousy and envy, like wine in a cask, ferments until its nature is fundamentally changed. It warps the logic and destroys the walls of inhibition. Cain entertained no restraints to his sinful intention. I do not say that he lacked faith altogether since he did at least bring an offering albeit the wrong offering; however, the faith of Abel was an efficacious, life-changing faith – strong, leading, and uncompromising. He died the first martyr of faith while his reprobate brother became a vagabond and outcast bound for the fires of the pit.

The whole difference in the two diverse natures demonstrated by Cain and Abel is described in the boundless faith of Abel, and the whining and compromising motives of Cain. God could see into the heart of Cain as clearly as through a glass pane. What he found in the heart of Cain is not rare in the hearts of many today – even those who believe their good works suit them for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Cain acted out of what he considered his *free will* which was not free at all, but in bondage to that old Serpent in Eden. Abel acted on the will of God whose will he had received as His heart's Temple when he surrendered his own self-will (*free will*).

Whose will do you believe drew you to Christ – your own, or God's Will, as employed by the embrace of the Holy Ghost? All who die in faith leave a voice which cries out from the dust of the earth, and that voice will be magnified down the ages to come until the Trumpet sounds.

*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.* (Revelation 14:13)