

## Lessons From Abel

By: Justin Witt

The entire story of Abel is recorded in Genesis 4:1-8. Certainly we are all fairly familiar with this story. Both Cain and Able offered sacrifices to God. Abel's sacrifice and consequently Abel was respected by God yet Cain and his sacrifice was not respected by God. Because of this Cain became jealous and angry and killed his brother Abel.

The first thing that I note from this is that they both understood the importance and the value of work. They had both been blessed, Cain in the field and Abel with the sheep. Because of those blessings and the work that they put in, they had fruits of their labor that they were able to bring an offering before God. Neither just sat around and wasted the blessings that they had been given.

The second thing that I note from this is that they both had some understanding of the importance of giving offerings to God. They both had some understanding of giving to God of the blessings that they had been given. Some people get the attitude that they have worked for all that they had and shouldn't have to give any back. People get boastful and proud with respect to the efforts they put into things and don't always give credit where it is due. But neither Cain nor Able became proud and took the attitude that what had been produced was theirs to hoard.

The third thing that I note is that we learn that while both brought offerings that only Abel and his offering were respected by God. Both worked, both brought but both were not respected by God. There are some thoughts as to why this might be. Note that in Genesis 4:3 it mentions that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground. In Genesis 4:4 it mentions that Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. Abel didn't just bring a sacrifice of the flock that he had charge over, he brought the first of the flock that he had charge over. I suspect that if Cain had brought of the first of the fruit of the ground it would have said so. It seems likely that Cain took what he needed first and then gave of what was left over. It seems very much like what we see from the people that gave in Mark 12:41-44 with the poor widow following the model of Abel.

According to Hebrews 11:4 Abel brought a more excellent sacrifice and that it was by faith that he offered this to God. What is the difference in the faith that it takes for Abel's offering and what Cain brought? It seems very likely that Abel took the first of what he had and gave it to God without already having his needs taken care of. He offered up what he had with the faith that all he needed would be provided for. Just as the widow giving all that she had demonstrated the faith that she had in God, that He would provide for her. It demonstrates faith when a person gives first and trusts that God will provide after.

It is ever so important for us to all realize the blessings that we have been given, that we make full use of them, and that we present acceptable offerings to God. Many of us have been given health and time and jobs and families. Even Cain knew that he had to work with what he was given. Even Cain knew enough to not let his gifts just go to waste. But we also must remember to give God the firstfruits of our labors. He deserves more than our left over time and effort and money. We should be giving first with faith enough to know that as we seek Him first, He will provide all that we need (Mt 6:33).