

# The Example Of Abel

**Introduction.** There are several Old Testament individuals about whom we know a great deal, such as Abraham, Moses, and David. There are others about whom we know very little, sometimes not even their names, such as Lot's wife, the butler and baker in Egypt, and David's little child who died. Then there are those in between, about whom we know some but not a whole lot. The account of Abel, found in Genesis 4:1-10, would fall into the latter category.

However, the lives of all people recorded in the Old Testament, whether we know much or little, are there for a reason (Romans 15:4). It is not just to give us some interesting biographical or historical information, but to provide important lessons by which we can learn something about God. What do we learn from the example of Abel?

## ***I. Obeying***

- A. Even though he was only one of a few people on Earth at the time, Abel realized that God was a Being who needed to be obeyed (Genesis 4:1-4).
- B. Why did God respect Abel and his offering? The Bible says that it was because Abel acted by faith (Hebrews 11:4). There is only one way to act by faith (Romans 10:17). Thus, we conclude that God must have spoken.
  - 1. We do not know exactly what God told Cain and Abel about sacrifices. The most logical conclusion is that He wanted animals offered.
  - 2. However, it is precarious to claim that the absence of blood disqualified Cain's gift (cp. Deuteronomy 26:1-11); all that is explicit here is that Abel offered the "firstlings of his flock" and that Cain's spirit was arrogant (5b; cp. Proverbs 21:27).
  - 3. But whatever He said, Abel did exactly as He commanded. Abel's example teaches the importance of obeying God.
- C. We have to obey God as Abel did to meet His conditions for our salvation (Romans 6:17-18). However, even after we become Christians, we have to be faithful in obeying God (Colossians 1:23; Philippians 2:12). There are several items involved in faithfulness:
  - 1. Turn from sin and live righteously (Ephesians 4:1).
  - 2. Worship God in spirit and truth (Acts 2:42-47).
  - 3. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord (1 Peter 2:2).
  - 4. Work to convert and strengthen others (John 15:1-8).

## ***II. Suffering***

- A. Unfortunately, Abel suffered because He obeyed God. In contrast to God's acceptance of Abel's sacrifice, when God did not accept Cain's, he killed his brother (Genesis 4:5-8).
  - 1. Why did this occur? Cain chose to follow the will of the evil one in offering a sacrifice that was not acceptable to God. Rather than repenting, he continued to listen to the evil one and vented his frustration by murdering his righteous brother (Ephesians 4:31; 1 John 3:12).

2. In His Sermon on the Mount, which is the basis of character for those who want to enter His kingdom, Jesus warned His disciples of the reality and joy of suffering for the sake of righteousness (Matthew 5:10-11).
- B. After the start of the church, Christians were persecuted for righteousness' sake (Acts 5:40-42). And even though we may not be put to death, as were Abel and many in the first century, we know persecution is a possibility (2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 3:13-15; 4:1-2). From the example of Abel, we can learn to expect it.

### **III. Speaking**

- A. Finally, the blood of Abel spoke metaphorically, even though he was dead (Genesis 4:9-10).
1. Adam and Eve had run to hide when they heard God's voice (3:8), but God heard Abel's voice crying from the ground and Cain could not hide.
  2. The shedding of innocent blood pollutes the land (Numbers 35:30-34), and that blood cries out for justice (Job 16:18; Isaiah 26:21; Revelation 6:9-10). In striking contrast, the blood of Jesus cries out for grace (Hebrews 12:24).
  3. Though long dead, Abel still speaks to us because his obedience and suffering for righteousness' sake are recorded in the scriptures (Hebrews 11:4), so that Jesus was able to make reference to him (Matthew 23:34-35).
- B. Even though our lives are not recorded in the scriptures, when we die we can still speak.
1. One way is by the influence we have on our families (Ephesians 6:4). Let me cite a personal example. I am a Christian because I heard and obeyed the gospel of Christ, but at some time in my family's history, I do not know exactly when, where, or how, my father was restored to Christ because of the efforts of a gospel preacher. In turn, the preacher and he taught my mother to know the Lord and become a Christian. It was from her that I first came to remember my Creator in the days of my youth (Ecclesiastes 12:1). So, someone whose name I do not even know still speaks through my life.
  2. Another way that we can speak is by our example shown to our friends (1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7). Even young people who are trying to serve the Lord can be a good example to their friends so that in later years, perhaps after they are dead, others whom they have influenced for good may still remember them. I have heard older Christians on occasion speak of some friend who is no longer alive but led them to Christ when they were younger. This kind of influence can still speak after death like Abel does.

**Conclusion.** We do not know very much about Abel, other than that he was the second son of Adam and Eve, that he was a shepherd, and that he was murdered by his brother Cain. Yet, by what we do know about him, he still speaks to us regarding the need to obey God, to be willing to suffer for righteousness' sake, and to be a good influence. Learn these lessons and follow this great example in your life now.