

"By Faith ..."

"... Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts; and through it, he being dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death and he was not found because God translated him: for he hath had witness borne to him that before his translation he had been well-pleasing unto God ..." (Heb. 11:4-5).

There are two words which identify both Abel and Enoch (although they were separated by many hundreds of years), those words being *"faith"* and *"witness."* The first verse of this significant chapter defines faith; the second verse reads, *"For therein (viz., in faith) the elders had witness borne unto them."* The sixth verse cites the absolute necessity of faith: *"And without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*

In the ages long since past, Abel has been a shining example of one who believed God. In this he was vastly different from his parents who fell into sin and death by their disobedience -- unbelief. God had said, *"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat ... for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die"* (Gen. 2:17). Satan came, lied to them, tempted them, and they fell. They did not walk by faith. For Abel to have offered by faith a more excellent sacrifice than Cain necessarily implies that: 1) a sacrifice had been commanded, and 2) God had equally designated the kind of sacrifice he wished for faith *"cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Rom. 10:17). God had commanded some kind of sacrifice. One can hardly suppose that both Abel and Cain spontaneously offered a sacrifice to God without some instructions from God that they do so. It was the kind of gift they offered that on the part of Abel was a gift of faith; but on the part of Cain, a gift of unbelief.

Through Abel's gift he had witness borne to him he was righteous; agreeing with verse two: *"therein the elders had witness born to them."* The Genesis record tells us only that God had respect unto Abel's gift; but that he had not respect for the gift of Cain (Gen. 4:4f). How did God manifest this *"respect"* or *"regard"*? The holy scriptures do not tell us. Did God send fire from heaven to consume his gift (as He had done unto the sacrifice of Elijah many millenniums later, 1 Kings 18:38) while the sacrifice of Cain was not so accepted? The scriptures do not tell us. But, whatever and however God revealed both His pleasure for the gift of Abel and His displeasure at the gift of

Cain, both of Adam's sons were aware of God's approval and disapproval. Otherwise, Cain would not have been filled with wrath, would he? Nor do we know whether it was at the first offering the sacrifices were shown to be accepted or rejected, or after the offering of more. We do know that the record tells us of the "*gifts*" (plural) of Abel.

While there are many things we do not know, some things we do know. We know that although he is now dead, Abel still speaks to us today. His message is, "*Walk by faith.*" "*Live by faith.*" This is what is pleasing to God!

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