

Hebrews 11:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Abel offered 'a more excellent sacrifice than Cain' (Genesis 4:3-5), demonstrating faith. The quality difference showed Abel understood God's requirement of blood sacrifice for sin, while Cain brought mere produce. 'By it he obtained witness that he was righteous'—God testified to his righteousness by accepting his sacrifice. Though dead, Abel's faith 'yet speaketh,' testifying that faith pleases God and the way to God is through blood sacrifice.

Historical Context

Abel's sacrifice predates the Mosaic law by millennia, showing that the principle of substitutionary blood atonement has always been God's plan. The first biblical martyr died at the hands of unbelieving religious activity.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does Abel's sacrifice teach about approaching God on His terms rather than yours?
2. How does your faith speak testimony to others even beyond your lifetime?

Interlinear Text

Πίστει	πλείονα	θυσίαν	Ἄβελ	παρὰ	Κάϊν	προσήνεγκεν
By faith	a more excellent	sacrifice	Abel	than	Cain	offered
G4102	G4119	G2378	G6	G3844	G2535	G4374
τῷ Θεοῦ δι' ἣς μαρτυροῦντος εἶναι δίκαιος						
G3588 God	G1223 by	G3739 which	G3140 he obtained witness	G1511 that he was	G1342 righteous	
G2316	G1223	G3739	G3140	G1511	G1342	
μαρτυροῦντος ἐπὶ τοῖς δώροις αὐτῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ δι'						
he obtained witness	of	G3588	gifts	his	G3588	God
G3140	G1909		G1435	G846	G2316	G2532
αὐτῆς ἀποθανὼν ἔτι λαλεῖται						and
his	he being dead	yet	speaketh			by
G846	G599	G2089	G2980			G1223

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 12:24 (Parallel theme): And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Matthew 23:35 (Righteousness): 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.

Genesis 4:10 (Parallel theme): And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

Proverbs 15:8 (Sacrifice): The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Jude 1:11 (Parallel theme): Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

Genesis 4:8 (Parallel theme): 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.

Genesis 4:15 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

Leviticus 9:24 (Sacrifice): And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.

Hebrews 9:22 (Parallel theme): And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Hebrews 12:1 (Witness): Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,