

## Hebrews

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Hebrews 11:4-6



### Vs. 4

- The preacher begins his Honor Roll of Faith with Abel. On the surface the story of Cain and Abel is a curious one. Why *did* God prefer Abel's sacrifice to Cain's? The ancient Jews had a variety of legends and stories around why God favored Able's sacrifice and what *really* happened between the two brothers.
- Perhaps it had to do with the nature of the specific sacrifices themselves. In Genesis 4 we are told that Cain brought a sacrifice from "the fruit of the ground" because he was a farmer, a "tiller of the ground", while Abel was a shepherd, a "keeper of flocks". Abel sacrificed a lamb, one of the "firstlings of the flock". Note that the Word in Genesis 4 does not say that Cain offered the first fruits of his harvest. Did Cain offer God the culls, the fruit that was perhaps picked last and was not the very best? And then there is the blood. The preacher in his long argument about Christ being the perfect High Priest makes it clear that there is no forgiveness without the spilling of blood (Hebrews 9:22). Perhaps Cain did not offer God his very best. But it may be that God was simply teaching that a sacrifice of blood, specifically a lamb's blood, was what He truly desired, readying His people for the Passover someday and then later the ultimate sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.
- For whatever reason God favored Abel's offering over Cain's, the boy became angry and jealousy and envy entered his heart. God saw this and warned him that "sin is crouching at the door" (Genesis 4:7), and God told Cain to master his sin. Indeed, if we do not master our sin, our sin will master us!
- The preacher tells us that even though Abel is dead, because of his faith, Abel is still speaking to us. Moffatt tells us that, "Death is never the last word in the life of a righteous man". Abel left a legacy of faith. The price of the lamb alone was not the true price of the sacrifice, but all of the future lambs he/she would have produced. Over time the real cost of a lamb's sacrifice may well be hundreds of lost offspring before the full-grown animal ultimately dies, but by sacrificing the lamb what you are saying in part is that you are trusting God for your future security rather than in your skills of husbandry. Perhaps this is what Abel is still speaking to us and the true nature of his sacrifice.

## Vs.5-6

- Genesis 5 is a genealogy, a family tree, listing the descendants of Adam and Eve. Verse 18 tells us that a man named Jared had a son named Enoch. Verses 21-24 tells us that Enoch was the father of Methuselah and other sons and daughters and twice the Word says that throughout his life Enoch walked with God. The last word on Enoch, without saying anything else, is that one day Enoch simply was not there, “for God took him”.
- Because Scripture does not say what exactly happened with Enoch a variety of legends arose over the ages about who he was and how exactly God took him. One was that he taught people how to tan leather and make shoes, that he taught people how to make ink and paper and how to write. Another was he met the Angel of Death and made a deal with him to see what the afterlife was like and that when he saw Heaven he never went back. The Book of Wisdom (aka. “The Wisdom of Solomon), written in Alexandria sometime around the birth of Christ, says that because the world was so wicked at the time of Enoch (and not long before The Flood), God took Enoch before he could be corrupted. Enoch chose to walk with God rather than to walk with a wicked world. Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish theologian who was a contemporary of Jesus, reading into the Enoch story a bit, saw in Enoch a pattern for repentance. Repentance is choosing God and His Way instead of the world and its way. He believed that Enoch simply died but that Enoch was so close to God that dying was nothing more than stepping through a door into God’s presence.
- The preacher concludes his word on Enoch with two thoughts. One, to have hope in this life and in the next, we must believe in God and have faith in Him. We cannot please God otherwise. Belief in God and faith in Him is the starting line of life. Two, we must believe that God cares. He is not like the gods of mythology, sitting at a distance, capricious and disinterested in the affairs of people except for their own amusement. We must believe that God’s great desire is that we have faith in Him and that He will reward such faith. Indeed, God so loved us that He sent His Son to us to tell us and show just how much He cares about us!