

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

## A Controversial Newsletter "The Printed Voice of Summit Theological Seminary"

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George L. Faull, Editor

### Cain and Abel's Sacrifice

-By Terry Carter

Dear Brother Carter,

How could God hold Cain accountable for his offering when it is never recorded that God told them what and how to sacrifice?

ANSWER,

Your question about Cain's sacrifice is a good one that is often asked. While the Bible does not record God giving Cain and Abel instructions for sacrifice, there are good reasons to believe that He had done so.

1. There are many things that the Patriarchs did in worshipping for which we find no explicit instructions from God recorded. However, it is a fair assumption that God had given them instructions since they seemed to know what to do.
2. **Hebrews 11:4** says that Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice by faith and **Romans 10:17** says that faith comes by hearing. This indicates that Abel must have heard what was required of him.

**"By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks"**  
**Hebrews 11:4**

**"So then faith [comes] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."**  
**Romans 10:17**

3. **Hebrews 11** is called, "The Faith Chapter" since it is filled with examples of men and women who acted in faith. Throughout the chapter we see that they were counted faithful when they obeyed what God had told them to do. There is every reason to believe that this was the case with Abel since he is mentioned along with the others here.
4. Notice that Genesis calls it an "offering" while Hebrews calls it a "sacrifice".



**"3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. 4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, 5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. 6 So the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"**  
**Genesis 4:3-6**

5. There is a difference. While every sacrifice is an offering, not every offering is a sacrifice. A sacrifice implies shed blood. An offering may involve shed blood, but it may not. Abel's offering was a sacrifice because it involved shed blood. Cain's offering did not. Abel offered a sacrifice. Cain tried to get by with a mere offering. He was probably the first to find out that you cannot get blood from a turnip.
6. The fact that God held Cain accountable for his offering is a pretty good indication that he knew what God expected. God later tells him that if he

does well he will be accepted. In order for him to do that, he had to know what that was.

7. John tells us that Cain slew his brother “because his deeds were evil”. That is a strong indication that he knew very well that his offering was not sufficient. It would seem rather harsh to call it evil if he did it in ignorance. However, it is definitely evil to do what you know very well is wrong.

“Not as Cain [who] was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And **why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.**” I John 3:12

8. God had already made a sacrifice for Adam and Eve. After they sinned God made them coats of skin. That required the death of an innocent animal victim. This was an example of what a sacrifice was to be. This was surely the institution of sacrifice.
9. They were grown men at the time of this incident. They may have made numerous sacrifices to God prior to this. Likely, they had seen their father offer sacrifices on a regular basis. It is an assumption that this was the first time they offered sacrifice to God.
10. In verse 7, God tells Cain that if he does not do well, sin is lying at the door.

“If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, **sin lies at the door.** And its desire [is] for you, but you should rule over it.” Genesis 4:7

The Hebrew word here for “sin” is *chattaah* which is translated “sin offering” over 100 times in the Old Testament. In fact, the Septuagint in this verse translates it with the Greek word, *hamartia* (sin). That word is used of Jesus in II Corinthians 5:21 where Paul says He made Him sin for us who knew no sin. That is, Jesus was made to be a sin offering for us although He knew no sin Himself.

“For **He made Him who knew no sin [to] [be] sin for us,** that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” II Corinthians 5:21

This harmonizes this passage perfectly with what Isaiah prophesied about Christ's death on the cross.

“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put [Him] to grief. When **You make His soul an offering for sin,** He shall see [His] seed, He shall prolong [His] days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.” Isaiah 53:10

This understanding is also reinforced by Young's Literal Translation.

“Is there not, if thou dost well, acceptance? and **if thou dost not well, at the opening a sin-offering** is crouching, and unto thee its desire, and thou rulest over it.” Genesis 4:7 YLT

The Hebrew word for “lieth” in Genesis 4:7 is *rabats*. Both Clark and Gesenius note that this word is used of a quadruped (a four-footed animal) lying at the door of his fold. It seems that God is telling Cain that since he sinned, there is a sin offering lying at the door. This would indicate that Cain and Abel were offering a sin offering, not just any thank offering. It also indicates that Cain knew that a sin offering was to be an animal. Clarke says, “*Cain's fault was in not bringing a sin offering when his brother brought one, and his neglect and contempt caused his other offering to be rejected.*”

Clarke translates the second part of Genesis 4:7 as, “*And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*” That is, if Cain would offer the sin offering that was lying at the door, he would still rule over his brother as the firstborn. This would be aimed directly at Cain's envy of Abel. Sadly, Cain did not listen to God just as he had not listened to Him earlier. He killed his brother rather than submitting to God.

11. The fact that God is presenting a sin offering indicates that Cain had sinned. But sin is transgression of the law and where there is no law, there is no sin.

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for **sin is the transgression of the law.**” I John 3:4 KJV

“Because the law brings about wrath; for **where there is no law [there] [is] no transgression.**” Romans 4:15

This is a strong indication that God had given them instructions about how and what to sacrifice. Otherwise, how could it be sin? And if it was not sin, why would God present a sin offering to Cain?