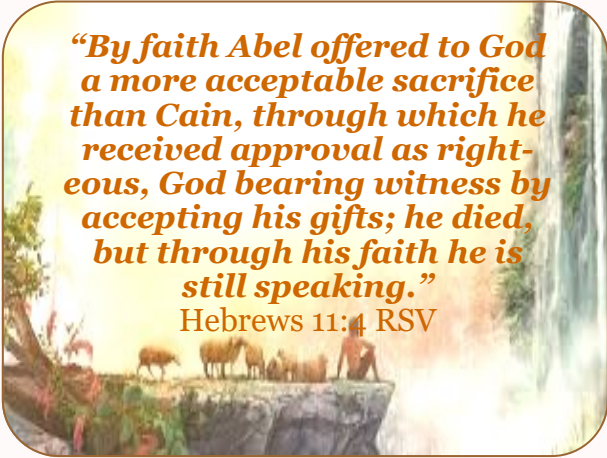


# Abel

## “In the Beginning”

**“By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts; he died, but through his faith he is still speaking.”**

Hebrews 11:4 RSV



He's my brother can mean so many different things to different people. We don't know if Cain and Abel were actual brothers or if they represent brothers then and now. Either way a brother relationship can be very happy and healthy or very sad .

Abel is mentioned in at least six books of the Bible and yet we know very little about him. Actually three of the times are in the New Testament. He was killed in Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament! We know he was a son of Adam and Eve. We know that he was killed out of jealousy by his brother, Cain, even though the Bible says he was innocent. Abel was faithful, but somehow over-powered by his brother. But perhaps the most wonderful statement in the Scripture above is *“through his faith he is still speaking.”* Many people are able to speak through their faith after they have left this earth. We don't think of it. We remember them as a great Christian who influenced us, or a

wonderful person. But we don't think they are still speaking to us, or do we?

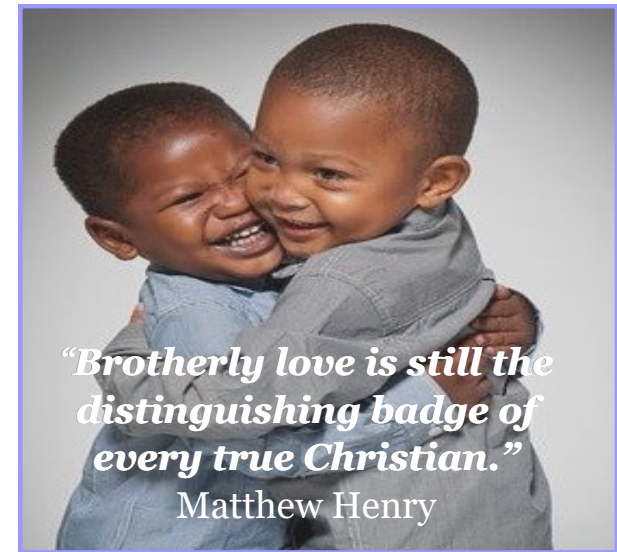
We know that Abel was a shepherd, not the highest position in the social order. But, if we take a second look at the role of a shepherd we can see that it may not have had a high status at that time according to society, but it earned an honest living. Exploring the duties and the fact that Christ has been called a shepherd makes us think a second time about the importance of the shepherd.

The shepherds were the ones chosen to receive the news that Christ was being born. We also recall that Christ said *“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”* John 10:11

*“Therefore, let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.”*

Romans 14:13

In Hebrews, the section containing the information about Abel is part of a great section on faith. *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old received divine approval.”* Hebrews 11:1-2. The writer then goes on to mention Abel and Enoch as having been approved by God because they had faith. We all want to have approval. We all want to be liked. But the ultimate is to be loved by God. All of us are loved by God, but we don't always accept that love. Abel was loved by God because he had faith. We don't know what Abel said



**“Brotherly love is still the distinguishing badge of every true Christian.”**

Matthew Henry

to Cain when he was going to kill him, but we do know that Abel had received God's approval and blessing and so he now has eternal life.

If we read the Bible passages that mention Abel, we realize that God had great regard for him and used him to explain life and faith to other people. The message from his life is still speaking. Many authorities think he was probably only a young man or even a youth when he was killed. Why is his story important? We have many stories of other young heroes who still influence lives every day. They are also important.

We don't all go out and kill our brother. Or do we? We hear people say that people kill others because they see it on television, or they know children are learning it from playing war games? Cain didn't have any of those “guidelines” but he had jealousy, a trait which all of us have to one degree or another. This passage talks a lot about faith – that simple thing that we cannot see, but that we must have if we believe in Christ as our

personal Savior. It doesn't cost a dime. It is free.

The shepherd may not have been considered a noble profession, but according to what we see when we look at Abel and Christ we couldn't do much better than be in the hands of the good shepherd, the one that gave His life for us.

An old hymn about a shepherd's thankfulness comes to mind based on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.



*"The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want; He makes me down to lie in pastures green; He leadeth me the quiet waters by.*

*My soul He doth restore again, and me to walk doth make within the paths of righteousness, e'en for His own name's sake.*

*Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale, Yet will I fear no ill; For Thou art with me, and Thy rod And staff my comfort still.*

*My table Thou hast furnished me In presence of my foes; My head Thou dost with oil anoint, And my cup overflows.*

*Goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me; and in God's house forevermore, my dwelling place shall be."*



Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for the Bible and the words of wisdom that it gives to us. Sometimes we don't understand why You have put something like this in there for us to read, and then as we see Your love, we realize that even in the worst circumstances You are there for us if we only believe in You as our Shepherd and Savior. Help us, dear Lord, to realize this free gift is ours if we only ask. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

1. Why would such a good person have been killed by his brother in jealousy?
2. How did God use Abel's death to tell about faith?
3. Why does God bring it up again in the New Testament?
4. How can we be assured of approval by God and the gift of eternal life?
5. Are we willing to be guided by a shepherd? Did the shepherds guide anyone to Christ when He was born? Why were they chosen?
6. Do we have the same promise that was given to Abel?
7. Have we asked ourselves lately who is really our brother? ho

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info@rgscripts.com

