

# What Do We Offer to God?

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The account of Cain and Abel, and their respective offerings to God, has been discussed and debated many times through the years. The debate revolves around why Abel's offering was accepted, and why Cain's was rejected. Some have reasoned that Cain's was rejected because it was bloodless. However, years later, when the Law of Moses came, we see that not all offerings to God required blood. There were grain and drink offerings (Lev. 2:1-16). These did not always require blood.

Often in our discussions of their offerings we turn to the book of Hebrews for the answer. It is there we read:

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

Hebrews 11:4

From this text, we can see that Abel's sacrifice was offered by faith. The same is not said of Cain's offering. That Abel offered his by faith speaks to the fact that he did it according to God's instruction (cf. Rom. 10:17). Herein is the difference between the two offerings. The text says nothing regarding Cain's offering being bloodless. All it tells us is that his offering was not by faith. In some way, Cain failed to follow the instructions God had given for offerings.

We are certainly blessed to have the text in Hebrews and the information it gives us. However, how did the people of Israel understand this event in the 1500 plus years prior to its writing? Is the account in Genesis solely dependent upon the book of Hebrews for an explanation? I don't believe so. There must have been something in the text for them to understand, in order for it to have meaning in their life. This means there is also something in the text in Genesis for us to learn, without turning to the book of Hebrews. Let's go to the text in Genesis and see what we can find.

So it came about in the course of time that **Cain brought an offering** to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. **Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings** of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

Genesis 4:3-5 ( Emphasis Mine)

Right away we can see the difference between the two offerings. The emphasis in the text seems to be placed on Abel bringing of the firstlings of his flock. In contrast, it says that Cain *just* brought an offering of the fruit of the ground. Nothing is said about the first fruits of his field. When the Law came along such was a requirement for grain offerings:

As an offering of **first** fruits you shall bring them to the Lord, but they shall not ascend for a soothing aroma on the altar.

Leviticus 2:12 (Emphasis Mine)

The Hebrew word rendered "first" means first, beginning, or best. The idea is that any offering made to God should be the best that one can give. David expressed the principle very well when he said, "I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing" (2 Sam. 24:24).

Putting this all together, we can see that the problem with Cain's sacrifice was that it was not his best. In not offering his best, his sacrifice was not by faith. Hence, as Hebrews tells us, Abel's was better (his best). Giving our best to God is a principle seen throughout Scripture. Notice how God, through the prophet Malachi, rebuked His people for failing to offer Him their best:

But when you **present the blind for sacrifice**, is it not evil? And **when you present the lame and sick**, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 1:8 (Emphasis Mine)

Of course, all of this begs the question: Are we giving our best to God? Do we give Him the best of our time? The best in our efforts to serve? The best of our love? Let us not make the mistake of Cain, and many others, by thinking that what we offer to God really doesn't matter, just as long as we offer it. God deserves our best in all things.