

Upcoming Events

Business Meeting
TODAY at 3:30 p.m.

Meet Up Class
Thursday, January 13 at 7:00 p.m.
28561 Sunnyslope St.
Desert Hot Springs CA 92241

Giving Our Best

“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord and not for people, knowing that it is from the Lord that you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.” Colossians 3:23-24

January Birthdays

14 Juanita Small

January Anniversaries

8 Bob & Debbie Pescador

Regular Meeting Times

Sunday.....9:45 a.m.

Sunday.....10:45 a.m.

Wednesday.....7:00 p.m.

Preacher:
Jack Critchfield

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81-377 Ave 46
Indio, CA 92201
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(Address Service Requested)

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Giving Our Best to God

By John M. Buttrey II

The account of Cain and Abel, and their respective offerings to God, has been discussed and debated many times. The debate revolves around why Abel's offering was accepted, and why Cain's was not. 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 (cf. Leviticus 2:1-16). The answer for why one was accepted and the other was not is clearly found in the book of Hebrews. 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 (Emphasis Mine)

From this text we can see that Abel's sacrifice was offered by faith. This speaks to the fact that he did it according to God's instruction (cf. Romans 10:17). The same is not said of Cain's offering. In some way, Cain failed to follow the instructions God had given for offerings. Perhaps those instructions required blood, which Cain's offering did not include. The bottom line is that Abel's offering was per God's instructions, and Cain's was not.

We are certainly blessed to have this 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? Of course not! There must have been something solely in the text in Genesis for Israel to understand in order for it to have meaning in their life. Let's look at the account 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 is on Abel bringing of the firstlings of his flock. In contrast, it only says that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground. Nothing is said about the first fruits of his field. When the Law came along, there was a requirement of the first fruits 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 finest. The idea is that any offering made to God should be the very 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 Samuel 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 offering was better (his best).

Giving our best to God is a principle seen in the Scriptures. God certainly has given us His best (John 3:16). 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)

All of this raises the question: Are we giving our best to God? Do we give Him the best of our time? The best of our efforts to serve? The best of our love?

Let us not make the mistake of Cain and so many others, by thinking that what we offer to God really doesn't matter to Him. It does matter! As with Abel so long ago, our offerings must be by faith. God deserves our best in all things.

God's Use of Water in Salvation

By Joe Slater

Our body is about 60% water. For me, that's around sixteen gallons! Water covers over 70% of Earth's surface. The U.S. Geological Survey says all the water in the atmosphere, on the surface, and under the ground totals over 332 million cubic miles! Obviously, water plays a huge role in our lives.

God has chosen to use water numerous times to bring salvation to people. For example, He used water to save a Syrian leper from his terminal disease (see 2 Kings 5:1-14). Water has no inherent healing properties, but God chose to use water to cleanse Naaman when he obeyed by dipping himself seven times in the Jordan.

Peter wrote that Noah & his family *“were saved through water”* (1 Peter 3:20). We usually think of the ark as the instrument that kept them from drowning, but that wasn't Peter's point. God used water to save them from the corrupt world all around them. The New American Standard and English Standard versions totally miss this vital point in their erroneous paraphrase, *“brought safely through the water.”* The text says, *“saved by (i.e. by means of) water”!*

Peter went on to say that just as Noah was saved by means of water, *“there is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism”* (1 Peter 3:21). Again, the chemical element water has no power to wash away sin. But God has chosen to use water in His plan to save sinners.

“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord”
(Acts 22:16).