

# Emblems From Antediluvian Times

by A.B. Simpson

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*The sermon explores the significance of Abel's sacrifice as a type of Christ's atoning death and the importance of faith and obedience in achieving holiness and perfection.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 4:3, Hebrews 11:4

**Topics:** "Faith and Obedience", "The Atonement of Christ"

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## Description

A.B. Simpson explores the significance of Abel's sacrifice as a profound type of Christ's atoning death, emphasizing that true faith acknowledges sin and submits to God's plan of mercy. He contrasts Abel's humble obedience and recognition of his need for atonement with Cain's self-righteousness and rejection of God's way, illustrating the eternal consequences of each choice. Simpson highlights Enoch's life as a model of holiness and faith, culminating in his translation as a symbol of the hope awaiting believers. The sermon calls for a deep reflection on our own faith and the necessity of recognizing our sinful state to fully embrace God's grace. Ultimately, it encourages believers to walk with God in faith, obedience, and anticipation of Christ's return.

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## Transcript

### SECTION I -- Abel's Sacrifice

In the two sons of Adam and Eve, human nature branched into its two great families, and these two races have since filled up the story of human life. The first born was, and still is, after the flesh. The type of faith and spiritual life came afterwards according to the inspired order, "that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural and afterwards that which is spiritual." Like the spiritual seed still, Abel was naturally weak; his very name signifies "a breath," and seems to express the thought of his frailty as perhaps may have seemed fitting to his disappointed mother in his infant feebleness. His chosen occupation, a shepherd, indicates, perhaps, a quiet, thoughtful spirit, free from the world's coarse ambitions; and brings him into the line of Abraham, David, and others of God's chosen ones, and makes him a fitting type of the Great Shepherd whom his own death afterwards prefigured. He is the first definite example in the Holy Scriptures of the rite of sacrificial worship, and is mentioned in this connection in the epistle to the Hebrews as the first type of justifying faith. No doubt the institution of sacrifice had already been given to our first parents, but Abel is the first whom we behold bringing his lamb to the gate of Eden, and presenting his bleeding offering on the divine altar beneath the brooding wings of the Cherubim. "By faith," we are told, "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and by it he obtained witness that

he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Abel's sacrifice, therefore, speaks to us through six thousand years as the keynote of the Gospel of Redemption. Other voices have spoken since, but this forever will be the first. His life was brief and simple, but this one act is enough to place its testimony in the very front of the cloud of witnesses, and to give him throughout eternity the foremost place in the choir that shall sing around the throne "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing."

1. Abel's sacrifice was a type of Christ's atoning death, and he no doubt understood it as the ground of his personal acceptance as a sinner in the sight of God. The language used respecting it in the fourth chapter of Genesis seems to identify it both with the sin offering and the peace offering of the latter Mosaic ordinances. The words of God to Cain in the seventh verse, which may be translated, "a sin offering lieth at the door," would seem to give this significance to Abel's sacrifice; and the reference to the fat in the fourth verse clearly identifies it with the peace offering of Leviticus, in which the fat was especially offered to God as representing his part in the offering of Christ. These two offerings, as we shall find later in the discussion of this subject in Leviticus, expressed, with great beauty and vividness, the effect of Christ's death in expiating and fully cancelling our sins, and bringing us into reconciliation and communion with God. The specific idea of the peace offering was that of a feast of fellowship between God and the sinner. He fed upon the fat of the sacrifice, and the sinner upon the flesh, while the blood made atonement and put away both the guilt and consciousness of sin. However fully these details may have been revealed to Abel, it is at least certain that he presented his lamb as an expression of simple faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ, and was justified precisely as we are under the Gospel.

2. His doing this was an acknowledgment of sin and a taking the place of a lost and guilty man at the footstool of mercy, deserving nothing but the judgment of God, and the same suffering and death which he witnessed in the helpless victim whose agonies and death before his eyes were the most affecting picture of what he deserved and what he escaped. This was what Cain refused to do, and the real reason why human nature ever since has also refused to accept the doctrine of Christ's cross and found it an offence. It is the humiliating confession that we are lost and guilty. A man will not submit to this so long as he can vindicate or help to justify himself; therefore conviction of sin and deep penitence are involved in true faith in Christ, and form the first stage of the Holy Spirit's saving work in our hearts. And so, in every stage, profound humility keeps step with highest trust, and the cross of Jesus is God's chief instrument for convicting us of sin and crucifying us to ourselves as well as to the world. No soul can see its Savior until it sees its sin, and then it will most deeply see and feel its sin, when it beholds its Savior. We must take the place of the publican, before we can take the place of the pardoned. The only believing ground is on our face at the foot of the cross with the penitent's appeal, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

3. Abel's act was an act of obedience and submission to God's revealed plan of mercy as it had been already, no doubt, made known to our first parents since the fall. This was the gospel of that early day, and in receiving it, Abel did exactly what we are commanded to do now, and what the pride and unbelief of Cain and all his race have ever since refused to do. "Going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteous God, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Abel did not stop to reason about the matter, but he simply came in God's appointed way and was accepted. This is faith, and everything else is unbelief. Cain tried to invent a way of his own and perished. Naaman thought that the waters of Abana and Pharpar of Damascus were as good as the Jordan, and he, too, would have perished had he not afterwards obeyed God's very instructions. The Pharisees were of the same race, and through the pride of their unbelief they

lost the salvation of their own Messiah. And so, today, the two classes are following in the same opposite lines; the one taking their own way, and the other submitting to God's way. Where are we standing? Let us yield our hearts implicitly to the obedience of faith. Let us submit ourselves to His judgment as condemned sinners, and then to His grace as pardoned sinners; and we can claim not only His mercy, but His justice and faithfulness to vindicate us as we meet Him on His own ground, and approach Him through His own appointed way.

4. We are told by the apostle that Abel's sacrifice involved a still further element, namely: believing that he was justified and righteous through the merits of his offering. Not only did he believe that he was a sinner, but he believed as strongly that now he was a pardoned sinner. Not only did he take the place of condemnation at God's word, but he rose also to the place of acceptance and sonship, "By faith he obtained witness that he was righteous." Faith must not stop with the penitent's plea, but must rise to the song of the pardoned: "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid." There is no presumption in this; it is simply honoring God's own word, and it pleases Him far better than our tears and pleadings after we have claimed the promise and the blood. His absolute word is, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Not to believe this and take our stand upon it is to make Him a liar, and to add the sin of unbelief to the sins which we are confessing. There would have been no humility in the prodigal's skulking in the kitchen after his father's tears and embraces of reconciliation. The good Francis De Sales was once visited by a poor, trembling sinner, who proceeded to tell him, with bitter tears, of his life of infamous wickedness. The good man listened, and then knelt with the penitent, and claimed the divine forgiveness in a few simple words of trust, and then, turning to the penitent, said: "Now, my dear brother, I want you to pray for me and bless me." The man was thunderstruck. "Bless you," he replied, with deep humility, "how can such a vile sinner as I presume to bless a holy man like you?" "Why, my dear brother," replied the good saint, "you are a vile sinner no more; have you not just been washed in the blood and clothed in the spotless raiment of the Lamb, even more recently than I, and just as perfectly as I, and therefore I want the first touch of your new blessing." The man at once saw the position that God required him to take, and trembling for very gladness he dared to claim his place as a child of infinite and everlasting love.

Yes, this is indeed our place, "IN WHOM HE HATH MADE US ACCEPTED IN THE SON OF HIS LOVE." O! what a transformation! What a miracle of divine transition! One moment lost, the next saved; now a child of the wrath, then a child of God; in the same hour reeking with blood-guiltiness, and whiter than the snow. O! have you claimed your place? Will you accept this unspeakable gift?

"Helpless and foul as the trampled snow;

Sinner, despair not! Christ stoopeth low

To rescue the soul that is lost in its sin,

And raise it to life and enjoyment again.

Groaning, bleeding, dying for thee,

The Crucified hung on the accursed tree;

His accents of mercy fall soft on thine ear --

Is there mercy for me? Will He heed my prayer?

O God! in the stream that for sinners did flow,

Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

Abel received this consciousness by simply believing. There is no doubt, however, that God added, after he believed, a visible token of the acceptance of his sacrifice, which is expressed by the words, "God had respect unto Abel and his offering." So our faith in Christ's promise is also sealed by the witness of God and the stamp of the Holy Ghost upon our heart, and also by the new place of love, honor and blessing to which God at once exalts us.

This is expressed by the word "respect." God treats us with divine respect. The moment we become united to Christ, we are the objects of His highest consideration; we are entitled to the regard He gives to His own dear Son; our persons, our prayers and all our interests become infinitely important to Him, and every angel in heaven is proud to minister to our welfare, and wait His bidding for His sons and daughters. O! what a place of honor and dignity does Christ bring us to! "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

6. But Abel also had to suffer for his faith. It cost him his life. He was not only the first witness to faith, but also the first martyr for Jesus; and, therefore, the word "witness" and martyr are the same word in the Greek language, and in the 11th chapter of Hebrews. Oftentimes our testimony for Christ must be through suffering, and sometimes through death. While we rejoice in the honors of our high calling, let us also be true to our testimony, so that not only while we live, but even "being dead " we shall, like Abel, "yet speak."

## SECTION II -- Cain's Fruits and Flowers.

The firstborn of Eve was welcomed by her fond maternal heart with a name which expressed all the pride and promise of earthly hope. She called him "a possession." She cried, "I have gotten a man," and, alas, he was but a man; the true type of flesh and humanity. His life as a husbandman may perhaps have expressed, in some measure, his proud resolve to overcome the curse of the fall, and force from the ground by skill and culture something that would contradict or counteract the thorns and thistles of the curse. He was proud of his work, and no doubt forgot that the ground had been cursed for man's sin.

Not only did it become the sphere of his occupation, but also the symbol of his spirit. His heart and life were of the earth earthy. He knew no higher religion than that which was born of earth, and had no higher aim and instinct than its pleasures and pursuits. And so when the time comes for public worship, the offering he brings is simply the fruit of his own farm, and the products of his own works. He recognizes no condition of sin or need of forgiveness, but treats God on equal terms, as one with whom he feels at liberty to exchange presents as with a human friend. He is not without religion, as few men are, but his religion has no recognition of sin, and therefore no need for atonement.

At the same time it may have been a very beautiful religion, as the religions without Christ often are. His altar at Eden's gate must have been much more attractive to the eye than Abel's; it was probably a tasteful rustic scene, perhaps festooned with flowers and vines, laden with the yellow ears of harvest and the many tinted fruits of orchard and garden, and worthy of the highest ideals of psychical culture, which the same spirit today is employing in oratorical ornaments, musical performances, architectural decorations and all the splendors of a gorgeous ritual and imposing ceremonialism.

As Cain's offering had no recognition of sin, it had also no place for Christ. There was no symbol of the coming Savior, no figure of the atoning lamb, no apprehension of the need of suffering and righteousness to satisfy the Holy God. Such is ever the characteristic of natural religion; such is ever the test of the true gospel.

To the old monk, in the vigils of his cell, it is said, the devil appeared in the most fascinating form. He looked like an angel, and spoke like a god. He said, "I am your Savior; I have come to bring you the assurance of my love and the vision of my glory, and I want you to worship me." The saint was almost deceived, but suddenly he turned to his visitor and said, "If you are my Savior, I will worship you and adore you; but if you are you will not refuse me the token I ask. If you are Jesus you will have in your hands and feet and side the print of the nails and the mark of the spear wound." In a moment the apparition changed; a cloud of blackness passed over his face, and with curses and hisses he vanished from the room. So we can ever test the true faith and the true gospel. It will ever have the marks of the crucified. Let us discard all forms of worship and religion which do not recognize fully our sinful and lost condition, and exalt with unmistakable definiteness the suffering and sin-atoning Savior.

Cain's offering was simply his works; the things that he had wrought with his sinful hands. It is the perfect type of every form of self-righteousness. They were unacceptable because they were the works of a sinful man, and the fruits of the accursed ground. And so our best works are tainted by the fact that we who perform them are sinners, and that they spring from the soil of our human nature which is already under the curse. There may be varieties and degrees of depravity, but the highest degree is enough to taint our best righteousness and make it as "filthy rags." And so Cain was rejected, as every such soul must be in the presence of God. Where do you stand, dear friend? Have you still your own righteousness, or have you the righteousness of Jesus Christ?

By many persons this question is regarded as a mere strife of words and question of dogmas, but we find very sadly in the story of Cain that a man's faith is the real source and spring of his life and conduct, and that a defect here will be fatal in all the issues of character and destiny. Unbelief, in Cain, steadily developed into wickedness of the most violent and aggravated form and led to irretrievable ruin. The first step is simply self-righteousness and rejecting Christ; the second is malice, envy and murder.

Not all at once did sin grow into these awful proportions. The word of God to Cain, as He gently pleaded with the erring one and sought to hold him back from his terrible career, contained a tremendous figure of the progress of evil. "Sin lieth at the door," has been translated, "Sin croucheth like a wild beast at the door." His sin was then but a young lion, and only crouching for its fatal spring. As yet it might be conquered; "Unto thee shall be its desire, and thou shalt rule over it." That is, now you can subdue it if you will, but if you wait till it has made its spring, you will be destroyed. Alas, it became too late for Cain to resist, and the unbeliever became the bloody murderer and a heaven-exiled fugitive, branded with the judgment of God.

But there is one more stage in Cain's career. This chapter closes, not with a scene of eternal judgment, but with the bright and fascinating picture of the first human city and the scenes of early culture, wealth and sensual delight. Separated from God, and lost to eternal hope, Cain, like others, turned to the world and became engrossed in its enjoyments and prospects. The religion that was born of earth, as shown in his city, terminates with earth.

The names of Cain's family and their pursuits are all connected with the various phases of wealth and culture. It was in his line that arts, manufactures, riches, and social and sensual pleasures had their birth. There we see the earliest types of physical beauty, musical taste, ambitious enterprise, city life, polygamy, and the panorama of earthly pleasure and human culture that have since grown into such vast proportions, and led men away from God and righteousness. It is the birth of mammon. It is the type of the world. It is the attempt of fallen human nature to find a paradise without God. It is the sad and mocking effort of the heart which has lost its inheritance to find a substitute beneath the skies; and it will end, as the picture of Cain's city ends, in the same bloodshed and violence.

### SECTION III -- Enoch's Translation

Symbolical numbers and names have a very important place in the Holy Scriptures. We find both of these in the story of Enoch. He was the seventh from Adam, and seven is the number of perfection. In him the race reached its ideal type, and that which God will ultimately bring redeemed humanity to realize, both in character and destiny; for Enoch realized God's highest ideal in both. He walked with God, he pleased God, and God took him in a chariot of glory above the floods of death.

His name, also, which signifies "Dedicated," was a type of his consecrated life and the root idea of true holiness, namely: single-hearted dedication to the will and glory of God. It is remarkable that the other race -- the race of Cain -- had an Enoch, too, and that Cain called his city after Enoch, his firstborn son. Does this not teach us that the world is dedicated to its aims and its gods with a singleness and strength of service which might well be a lesson to the children of God? Cain lived for earth with all his might, and Enoch lived for God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. The life and character of Enoch were in bright and lovely contrast with his own age. Three thoughts give the key to the whole:

(1.) He walked with God; it was not a self-constituted and independent holiness, but a personal contact with the Father, on whom he leaned for every step and supply, and with whom he kept step moment by moment, as we may still do on the heavenly pathway with our blessed Master. The life of holiness is not our life, but Christ in us, an ever-abiding all-sufficiency and presence.

(2.) Enoch walked by faith. Therefore it was not by works that Enoch pleased God, but by a life of trust and simple dependence.

(3.) Enoch pleased, and had the testimony that he pleased God. His aim was to please God; he expected to please God, and he had the consciousness that he pleased God. He believed that God accepted his simple-hearted purposes, and God witnessed to his consciousness the sense of an unbroken fellowship. So we may please him, too. His will for us is not an inexorable or impossible task, but a gentle and gracious plan adapted to our condition, fitted into the chain of circumstances every day, and made possible to us by the constant presence and unfailing resources of His Spirit and grace. Are we thus walking with God, thus walking by faith, thus pleasing Him, and basking in the light and gladness of His conscious and constant acceptance? Happy place! If it does not bring us to heaven in immediate translation, it at least brings heaven down to us.

The fitting climax of such a life was reached at last, and was the most majestic interposition of God's power in the antediluvian age, as well as the sublime type and figure of the future that is awaiting the Church of God in these last days. Without the intervention of death, without fear or pain, and perhaps in sight of the generation to whom he had witnessed especially of the future judgment and the coming of Christ, the holy man was translated, like Elijah in later times, and like his glorious Master from the mount

of Olivet, to the heavenly world. Undoubtedly it is meant for us as a figure of the translation which awaits the faithful children of God at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. While Noah's deliverance through the ark and the deluge is the figure rather of the destiny of such as shall pass through the days of tribulation that are coming upon earth, and be brought safely to the Millennial age beyond us; Enoch's translation represents rather the glory that awaits the watching ones whom shall be found walking with God at the beginning of this time of tribulation. "Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

It would seem that this blessed hope is especially linked with a life of holiness and a fearless testimony to the second Advent, both of which we see exemplified in holy and faithful Enoch. He lived a life of holiness, and he preached the Lord's coming; so God put upon his life and testimony this glorious seal. So let us watch and keep our garments for that day. When the marriage comes, they that are ready shall go in, and they that love his appearing shall receive the crown of righteousness.

Thus have we seen in these ancient ages the fulness of the Gospel in type and symbol; the faith of Abel, the holiness of Enoch, and the hope of glory; and, in contrast, the unbelief which rejects the blood, finds its portion in the world and bears its fruits of sin and misery. The Lord save us from the way of Cain, and lead us and keep us in the faith of Abel, the walk of Enoch, and the hope of our Master's coming.

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