

*"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God..." 11:3*

No human eye witnessed the creation of the world (see Job 38). The creation of the world by God's spoken word must be understood by faith. It is only by faith that things which are high above the reach of human reason can be apprehended. [Pink]

### **"framed by the word of God"**

Pink:

- "The essential and personal Word, the eternal Son of God" John 1:1
- "The written, ever-living Word, the Holy Scriptures" John 10:35
- "The Word of Power (*rhema*) in the spoken Word of God (Hebrews 1:3)

It is the third sense that is used by the author in Hebrews 11:3 in which it is the (spoken) word of God which "frames" or gives order to the word and everything in it.

The author's point seems to be that our faith does not rest on the visible creation – but the invisible, mystical word of God (see 11:27; Romans 1:20; 2 Corinthians 4:18; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17)

*"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain..." 11:4*

How does Abel come to understand that the sacrifice of a slain lamb would be the offering God would accept?

To answer that question we must first ask, "If Abel offers his sacrifice *by faith*, where did that faith come from?" To which we answer: where all faith comes from: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Where would Abel have heard the word of God as it relates to acceptable sacrifices? Possibly by direct revelation from God, but more likely through his father Adam.

What was God's word to Adam after Adam fell? Genesis 3:16-21

- "Cursed is the ground for your sake" Genesis 3:17  
"Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord" Genesis 4:3
- "...the Lord made coats of skins, and clothed them." Genesis 3:21  
"Abel...brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof" Genesis 4:4

Why is Abel's offering accepted by God and Cain's offering rejected?

- Because of Abel's faith in God's word and the resulting obedience. Pink: Abel by faith placed the blood of the firstlings of his flock between his sins and the avenging justice of God.
- Because Cain's sacrifice was the work of his own hands, the product of his labor, not offered by faith in the word which God had spoken to his father Adam. Just as Adam in vain covered his sin with fig leaves, so Cain in vain covered his sin with fruit of the ground – but worse – a sacrifice not offered **by faith**.

***“By which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts”***

*“obtained witness”* is the same phrase in the Greek as *“obtained a good report”* in verse 2

Abel had the assurance that his sacrifice (‘his gifts’) were accepted by God by faith:

- His sacrifice was accepted on the basis of faith
- His assurance was received on the basis of faith

“The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” Romans 8:16

John 20:29 – “...blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

- Who are *“they that have not seen”*?

Specifically, Jesus is referring to Old Testament saints who believed the promises of God that a Savior would come to save His people from their sins.

Jesus is also obviously referring to those who will believe on Him through the word (the preaching) of the apostles (John 17:20; 1 Peter 1:8)

*“...that he was righteous...”*

The imputed righteousness of Christ comes by faith and not by works.

Compare Romans 4, specially verses 3, 5, 9, 20-22

***“By it he being dead yet speaks.”***

- “The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground” Genesis 4:10 (compare Revelation 6:9-10)
- Abel’s faith is a testimony to us of the necessity of faith in our Substitute for the forgiveness of our sins and the imputation of righteousness
- Abel’s “yet speaking” though dead is a testimony that God is not the God of the dead but of the living, affirming that physical death does not end the life of those who live by faith.

“Though ruthlessly slain by his brother, the soul of Abel exists in a separate state, alive, conscious, and vocal.” [Pink]

“The just ***shall live*** by faith.” Hebrews 10:38