

LESSON FOUR

CAIN AND ABEL

TEXT: Genesis Chapters four and five.

A. THE TWO OFFERINGS:

Scriptural Reference:

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

In the above Scripture it does not state that Abel was a more excellent man than Cain was. It was Abel's sacrifice that was more excellent. Cain was a religious man. He was no infidel or atheist. He acknowledged the existence of God and was prepared to worship Him in his own way.

Cain might have been a fine man in many ways but he was not a spiritual man of faith. The sacrifice that he brought to the Lord proves this. No doubt Cain's offering was a very beautiful one. Very likely he had selected the choicest fruits and the most beautiful flowers. No doubt he had worked hard to prepare a beautiful and attractive altar. What was wrong with it? Why did not God accept it? Let us list the reasons why it was unacceptable to the Lord:

1. Cain's offering was bloodless and "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).
2. It was the works of his hands.
3. It was the fruit of the ground, but God had cursed the ground (Genesis 3:17).
4. It completely lacked the element of faith.

Now let us consider why God accepted the sacrifice of Abel.

1. Abel recognized that blood had to be shed for the remission of sin.
2. Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice because he did it "by faith."

"Faith cometh by hearing" (Romans 10:17). Both Cain and Abel had been told of God's act in the garden in clothing their parents with the skins of animals signifying that blood had to be shed. However, it was Abel who believed and obeyed.

Undoubtedly God accepted Abel's sacrifice by sending fire to consume the sacrifice. There was no visible sign of Divine approval for Cain's sacrifice.

B. THE FIRST MURDER:

Cain was angry that all his work would stand for nothing. He was angry that the sacrifice of his younger brother should be preferred above his own. He was angry and jealous of his younger brother and fearful that he would lose his birthright and that Abel would rule over him. His pride and self-righteousness were hurt.

His attitude showed just how wrong Cain really was.

God spoke to Cain and tried to give him a second chance. *"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him"* (Genesis 4:7). This Scripture is a difficult one to explain correctly and there are different interpretations. A common interpretation is that God told Cain that there was a proper sacrifice, a sin offering (lamb), lying at the door of his tent. If he would present this proper sin offering, his sacrifice would be accepted and that he would still retain the right of the firstborn and rule over Abel.

At any rate God had patience with Cain, instructed him, and gave him a second chance. However, Cain would not accept reproof and correction. He still thought that his sacrifice was better than that of Abel. When he was alone with Abel, he continued the argument and in anger he killed his brother. This was the first murder.

It should be noted that the first murder took place because of a religious quarrel.

C. CAIN'S PUNISHMENT:

Scriptural Reference:

"My punishment is greater than I can bear" (Genesis 4:13).

Adam made an excuse and tried to hide from God. So it was with his first son, Cain. So it always has been with the entire human race, the descendants of Adam and Cain.

Sin cannot be hid. *"Be sure your sin will find you out."* Man never has been able to learn this truth. When confronted with this sin, he lied and made an excuse. *"I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?"*

Cain's punishment would be severe. Everywhere he would go, the ground that held the blood of his brother would be against him. Memory and remorse would always follow him and he would not be content in any one place very long. He would be a fugitive and a vagabond. Cain cried out, *"My punishment is greater than I can bear."* Like thousands of others, Cain now realizes that he had done wrong, but he is still more occupied with his punishment than with the sin, which caused it.

"And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod" (Genesis 4:16). Nod means "wandering" - there is no peace or rest for the wicked. They are like the waves of the sea, like wandering stars lost in the darkness. Cain's greatest punishment was that of going out from the presence of God. What complete and utter hopeless despair, gloom, sorrow and remorse! Such is the punishment of a sinner banished from the presence of God!

D. TWO CLASSES OF PEOPLE:

Cain and Abel are representatives of two classes of people, of two religions.

Both were children of fallen parents, born outside of the garden after the fall. Both children needed salvation.

Cain represented a religion of good works, a religion that denies the atonement and has only a form of godliness but denies the power thereof. Abel represents a religion, which has faith in the finished work of Calvary, and knows the need of repentance and the new birth.

E. ENOCH:

The fourth chapter of Genesis gives the names of the lineage of Cain down to the seventh generation. These all were godless and materialistic and all eventually perished in the flood. This chapter closes with the birth of Adam's third son, Seth, from which Jesus Christ would be born.

In chapter five we should note verses one and three: "*God created man, in the likeness of God made he him*" (verse one). "*And Adam . . . begat a son in his own likeness, after his image*" (verse three). This proves that we are all made in the likeness of Adam.

Chapter five traces the lineage of Seth and each one ends with death. Eight times we read, "And he died." There is an exception when we come to Enoch, the seventh from Adam. Enoch was a wonderful character. He is one of but two men who went to heaven without dying.

Enoch may be studied by the following:

1. He walked with God (Genesis 5:24).
2. He pleased God (Hebrews 11:5).
3. He preached and warned of coming judgment (Jude 14).
4. He named his son, Methuselah, revealing the revelation he had received of coming judgment. Methuselah means, "When he is dead it shall be sent." This may be one reason Methuselah lived so long.
5. He is a type of the church to be caught away when Jesus comes.

Before the flood there was great spiritual darkness but the testimony of Enoch stands out like a beacon light. So it is with the true church today.

LESSON FOUR

SELF HELP TEST

A. How was Abel's sacrifice more excellent than Cain's?

B. Show how God gave Cain a second chance.

C. Describe the punishment of Cain.

D. Write a character sketch of Enoch.