

CHRIST IN THE POPULAR STORIES

CHAPTER 3

CAIN AND ABEL

Genesis 4: 1-16

Genesis 4: 1: And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. 2: And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3: And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4: And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. 6; And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? 7: 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. 8: And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. 9: And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? 10: And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. 11: And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; 12: When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. 13: And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear. 14: Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. 15: And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. 16: And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

We live in a world where everyone is religious. Did you know that all religions can be summed into two groups: the way of Cain or the way of Abel.

Cain represents the way that seems right unto men (Pro 14:12), the way of the flesh, way of works, the way of self-righteousness, the way of self-glory. Cain approached God with the best efforts of all his labors, "the fruit of the ground." But God had no respect unto him or his offering. God says, "woe unto them that have gone the way of Cain" (Jude 24).

Abel represents God's way of mercy to undeserving sinners. It is the way of free grace (Rom 3:24), the way of substitution by a blood offering (2 Cor 5:21), the way of God-given faith. (Heb 11:4) Abel and his offering is an example of the only way of salvation in and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 4:12) The Lord called Abel a righteous man (Mt 23:35).

Now, which way are you going? All men by nature are going the way of Cain. It comes to us naturally. It seems logical and reasonable to approach God in our works. But our best efforts will never satisfy God's offended justice. (Ps 39:5; Lu 16:15) May God now take his sheep out of the way of Cain and put them in the way of Abel.

NO DIFFERENCE BY BIRTH

There was no difference in Cain and Abel according to their natural birth. Both were sons of Adam. Each were born with same corrupt nature of Adam. (Rom 5: 12) Both were taught by Adam the promise of Christ

to come, which God taught Adam in the garden. (Gen 3: 15, 21, 24) Each came with an offering to the LORD.

THE DIFFERENCE MADE BY GOD

Yet, Hebrews 4 tells us that there was a difference in these two, “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” (Heb 11: 4)

How did Abel have faith in God? Abel had faith the same way every sinner has faith. It was by God’s grace and gift alone, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph 2: 8-10)

Abel was born of the Spirit of God. (Eph 2: 1-5) He was given faith by the grace of God. Abel was the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus. His offering by faith was one of those good works God before ordained that Abel should walk in. Therefore, we read, “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.”

The truth is that any sinner who is different from any other sinner is different only by the difference God has made. “For who maketh thee to differ *from another*? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it*?” (1Co 4:7)

THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WAYS THEY APPROACHED GOD

Now, let us see the two different ways these men approached God. “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof.” (Gen 4: 3-4)

Cain was a tiller of the ground. He was an man of dust who brought the fruit of the dust as an offering unto the LORD. It does not say it was his first-fruits. The law of the first fruits was given years later by God through Moses. It teaches us why Cain’s offering was not accepted by God. The law of the firstfruits required a sinner to take the first ripe fruits from his field and bring them all to God. It signified he believed and trusted God had given him his fruits and that God would continue to provide life for him. By bringing the firstfruits the sinner testified that all his hope was in God. He testified by his sacrifice that he believed and rested in God alone for life. Though this law was not yet given when Cain brought his fruits, we see that by not bringing the firstfruits, Cain did not believe God.

Also, Cain’s offering was without blood. “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.” (Heb 9: 22) That means, not only was Cain’s offering without faith, it was without a confession of sin and inability and it was without faith in Christ the Substitute. Cain offered his self-will, his pride and his unbelief unto the LORD.

On the other hand, Abel was a shepherd of sheep, “And Abel, he also brought, of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof.” (Gen 4: 4) Abel selected the firstborn of his flock, the very best lamb. He brought this spotless firstling to the altar and there Abel slew the lamb. Along, with it, Abel offered the fat thereof so that the sweet smell arose up from off the firey altar.

This shows that Abel came by faith. He came confessing that he justly deserved to be slain because he was a ruined sinner. By his offering, Abel confessed that he believed that Christ was all his salvation by God’s free,

justifying grace. He testified that he had no power to save himself, but must be saved in the blood of Christ the Lamb of God.

Think of the one you love more than any other. Imagine that one has honored you, glorified you, and done all that you asked. Then two men come to you. One comes praising that one you love and confessing himself nothing. The other comes trampling your loved one under foot. Which one will you receive? Able came praising Christ, God's beloved Son; Cain came trampling the blood of Christ under foot. "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb 10: 29)

THE DIFFERENCE IN THE RECEPTION

Therefore, who did God receive and who did God reject? "And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. (Gen 4: 4-5)

We have seen already, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh... But without faith it is impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb 11: 4, 6)

The LORD accepted Abel in Christ the Beloved fully justified and righteous, holy and accepted of God. Like all the believer's works of obedience to God, through faith in Christ, Abel's offering came up to God with the fat, as a sweet smelling savor.

But such was not the case with Cain, "But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." (Gen 4: 5) Cain did not repent and beg God for mercy. He got very angry at God and at his brother. This was Cain's heart of enmity against God all along. It is the heart of all will-workers, unregenerate in their sins. (Rom 8: 7) There is no joy, no cheer anywhere but through faith in Christ. None will ever have assurance trusting in man's will.

THE FAULT

Notice, the fault was not God's but Cain's, "And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" (Gen 4: 6-7) God told Cain that if Cain turned from his works and believed on Christ, if he came with God's one offering, he would be accepted of God.

For all who read this now, who do not believe on Christ, why do you blame God? God says, "If you come in Christ, shall not you be accepted?" It is not God's fault; it is the fault of those who believe not on the Lord Jesus Christ. God is willing to save all who come to him through faith in Christ. Christ said the problem is "ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." (Jn 5: 40) "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." (Jn 3: 19-21) The evil deeds are those self-righteous religious deeds, like Cains, which a natural sinner will not confess to be worthless.

THE FIRST MURDER

Instead of repenting from their vain works and believing on Christ, unregenerate, self-religious sinners persecute and murder. The first murder ever committed in this world was a will-worker killing a believer who was saved by grace through faith, “And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.” (Gen 4: 8)

The natural man hates God. The will-worker hates that God saves by sovereign electing grace, by Christ redeeming his particular people and by the Holy Spirit regenerating and gifting us with the ability to rest in Christ. It is why man crucified the Lord of glory. But because the will-worker cannot get to Christ now, he murders or slanders or persecutes or rejects the believer who rests in Christ. It began after the fall and it has never changed, “But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.” (Gal 4: 29)

THE END OF THESE TWO WAYS

Lastly, what is the end of those who come before God in these two very different ways? We saw that God received Abel.

But what becomes of the will-worker who goes the way of Cain? God tried, sentenced, cursed and cast Cain out of his presence, “And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth...And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.” (Gen 4: 10-12, 16)

Christ said in the day of his return and his judgment, “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” (Mt 25: 46)

MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE WAYS

The only two beliefs in the whole world throughout all time is grace and works. The way of Abel is the way of grace; the way of Cain is the way of works. These two ways are opposite and opposed and will never harmonize, “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” (Rom 11: 6)

We need for God to graciously create us anew and sweetly force us to go the way of Abel, bringing us to cast all our care into Christ’s hand and rest in him! May God be pleased to use these words to do so for one of his lost sheep now!

Amen!