

Genesis 4: Cain and Abel

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Genesis 4 is a heartbreaking chapter, as it records the first murder and the subsequent devastation that was had on the first family. There are a number of lessons to be learned from this record.

WE MUST OFFER GOD WHAT HE DESIRES

Genesis 4 records the first sacrifices of men in Scripture. Cain (the oldest) brings out some of the produce of the ground, while Abel brings the firstlings of his flock. What Cain offered was unacceptable to God, and God had no regard for him or his offering. Yet Abel's gift was accepted. It may be that this was something God had spoken about earlier, or perhaps they had discerned this from the first sacrifice God made to cover Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). It may have been simply that the offerings of Cain were not the best or first. Whatever the case, Cain should have known what was pleasing to God, but did not offer it.

An important lesson here is that we must offer to God the sacrifices that He desires, not the ones we want to offer Him. We no longer offer animal sacrifices, but we are told to offer ourselves as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2), and to offer the fruit of our lips (Hebrews 13:15). We cannot simply offer what we think is right, even if we think it is best. A sacrifice to God must be what HE has asked for, not what we want to offer.

WE NEED TO HAVE A GOOD ATTITUDE

When Cain's sacrifice is rejected, the Bible says he became angry and his countenance fell. God warns him that he needs to improve his attitude, as sin was preparing to come to him through his demeanor. This is an important lesson. Our attitudes are a major reason why we sin. We are warned often in the New Testament of the dangers of bad attitudes and emotional outbursts. Bad attitudes lead to evil behavior, as seen in the "Root of bitterness" of Hebrews 12:15-16. Anger is a great danger (James 1:20), and jealousy destroys (James 3:14-16). Consider the warning of 1 John 3:12: *(Be) not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.*

SIN WILL ALWAYS BECOME KNOWN

When we sin, we want to keep it secret. Adam and Eve hid in the Garden, and David tried to cover up his wickedness with more wickedness. Sin is a work of darkness that is revealed by the light (Eph. 5:12). We need to consider that God works to make our sins known. He does this because He desires that we repent of our sins, and because He desires that others fear the works of sin. As Jesus said in Luke 12:2-3 *"But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops"*

THERE ARE CONSEQUENCES TO SIN

We know from Genesis 3 that the wages of sin are spiritual death (Romans 6:23). We also saw in Genesis 3 that sin ruins lives now; we call this the consequences of sin. In this chapter, what were the consequences of sin? It broke apart the first family; it caused Cain to be rejected and alone; it cost Cain the promise of the land. Jude 10 warns of the nature of sin to cause destruction, pointing to the error of

Cain and others who suffered in this life (and still had the wages of sin) for sin: *For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.*

REPUTATIONS

Cain becomes the model of the world and worldliness. The world wants to pursue God its own way. The world despises those who seek God His way. Abel becomes the model of righteous men; *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).*