

Lesson 6 CAIN AND ABEL

READING: GENESIS 4, 6:14; HEBREWS 11:4; 12:24; I JOHN 3:11-18

AIM: To show that God requires true worship in the way He has appointed.

1. BACKGROUND

Due to disobedience, Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden to commence a life of toil and suffering under sentence of death. But God, in His mercy, opened a way of salvation through sacrifice.

This lesson concerns Cain and Abel, who were the sons of Adam and Eve. Cain was the elder. He was an husbandman or tiller of the soil. Abel was a shepherd who cared for the family flocks.

The time came for offerings to be brought to the Lord. Though we have no record of any laws concerning sacrifices in these early days, the epistle to the Hebrews refers to the sacrifices made by Cain and Abel:

**"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 (Abel) being dead yet speaketh" (Heb 11:4)**

2. CAIN'S AND ABEL'S OFFERINGS - Gen. 4:1-7

Abel brought an offering of "the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof". In bringing this sacrifice in faith Abel did as God required. He sacrificed an animal, shed its blood, and had faith that God would accept such an offering.

Cain brought the fruits of the ground as an offering to the Lord. When his offering was rejected "Cain was very wroth and his countenance fell". Cain became angry and sullen. God remonstrated with him and assured him that if he acted obediently his sacrifice also would be acceptable (Gen. 4:7).

Abel became an example of a faith well-pleasing to God. He obeyed God and made a sacrifice in faith which was acceptable. While Abel was righteous, Cain persisted in his evil way and did not submit to God's censure. He was willfully rebellious, refusing God's offer.

3. CAIN THE MURDERER - Gen 4:8-26

With jealousy and hatred in his heart, Cain went out into the field and murdered his brother. God, who knows the thoughts of the heart, accused Cain, who denied having done wrong. Thus Cain committed a further sin of lying to God.

God allowed Cain to live, but his punishment was severe. He was told that no longer was he to earn his living by tilling the soil and producing fruits by his labours. God decreed that he was to leave his home and family, and that he should be a fugitive wandering the strange lands of the earth.

Cain confessed that his punishment was greater than he could bear. He possibly feared that his life would be sought in revenge. But though driven from the face of God, God did not leave him altogether. He put a mark on Cain and declared that anybody slaying him would be punished.

Cain was thus driven from the presence of God and dwelt in the land of Nod.

"THE LAND OF NOD" means the Land of Exile.

"FROM THY FACE SHALL I BE HID" (Gen. 4:14) means that Cain was cut off from access to God because he would not submit in the way required.

But what of Abel? God raised another son to Adam named **Seth** who took Abel's place. He worshipped God in truth in contrast to the older Cain. From the line of Seth (who carried on the line of Abel) came the Seed of the Woman, Jesus Christ.

Thus the line of Abel triumphed over the seed of the serpent. Faith, truth and righteousness gained the victory over the evil murder by Cain. Righteous Abel will be raised to eternal life when Jesus returns.

4. IMPORTANT POINTS OF THE LESSON - 1 John 3:11-18

The early chapters of Genesis contain no direct records of laws to be kept concerning the offering of sacrifices, but the implications are that sacrifice was instituted by God soon after man sinned. When Adam and Eve sinned God demonstrated that a covering of leaves was inadequate and the skin of an animal (slain in the process) was necessary.

God requires that blood should be shed for the remission of sin. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin, the Apostle declares (Heb. 9:22). Christ's blood was shed so that we might make our approach to God and seek forgiveness of our sins. Let us not go "in the way of Cain" (Jude 11) but always choose the way of Abel and not neglect so great salvation (Heb. 2:3).

- (1) There is only one way to approach God, the way He has appointed. No other way will do. Abel chose the right way (John 4:23).
- (2) Vicious deeds result from jealous feelings and evil thoughts. One sin leads to another. First Cain disobeyed God, then killed Abel and later lied to God. Cain's motive for slaying his brother is laid clearly before us by the Apostle John, "**Wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous**": (1 John 3:12). Murder sprang from the feeling aroused in Cain because of the contrast between his own self-righteousness and Abel's acknowledgement that true righteousness comes only in obedience to God.
- (3) The punishment meted out to Cain was repeated to the Jews when they crucified Jesus. Like Cain they became fugitives and wanderers in the earth and in them, as on Cain, God has placed a "mark" and has threatened with vengeance any who shall touch them. The wandering Jew enacts the part of Cain, until God shall restore him to favour once again (Matt. 23:35; Rom. 11:25-26)

5. THE ASCENDANCY OF EVIL - Gen 6:1-4

Abel had been murdered, but God replaced him with another righteous man, Seth. He and his descendants acknowledged the Lord and called upon His name (Gen. 4:26).

For a long time, the descendants of Cain and the descendants of Seth remained apart and lived separate lives. The descendants of Cain, although skilful and clever, were wicked and rebellious against God. In course of time they attracted some of the "sons of God" (descendants of Seth) who being led astray by the beauty of the "daughters of men" (i.e. descendants of Cain), intermarried with them.

Such alliances, outside the faith, proved fatal to the separateness that the true "sons of God" should have manifested (II Cor. 6:14). They were completely drawn into worldly ways. Their offspring were "giants" not only men of good physique, but also giants in crime before God. They were "mighty men" - the word in Hebrew implies men of war – and were held in "renown" among those who sought not God.

6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

It is characteristic of the world which follows the way of Cain, to hate those who condemn its evils by their good conduct. Marvel not at this, says John (I John 3:13) knowing that those who love and do not hate have passed from "death" to "life".

Taking up the thoughts of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, John warns that we do not have to commit the act of murder to be a murderer, for "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (I John 3:15)

The essential element from God's point of view is the attitude of mind, of which the outward deed is but the expression. **"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth"** (I John 3:18)

REFERENCE LIBRARY

"Elpis Israel" by John Thomas	Part 1, chapter 4
"The Letter to the Hebrews" by John Carter	Section 5 (d)
"The Law of Moses" by Robert Roberts	Chapter 2

7. QUESTIONS

1. Who were Cain and Abel and what offerings did they bring to God?
2. Why was Abel's offering accepted and Cain's rejected by God?
3. Why did Cain slay Abel?
4. Describe the difference in attitudes between Cain and Abel?
5. What punishment did Cain receive and how was Abel "replaced"?
6. Upon what Basis is our worship acceptable to God?