

Bi121 Old Testament

Lesson Bi121- 4 Cain and Abel (Genesis 4)

Do you think God cares more about what we give Him and do for Him, or the relationship we have with Him? In the lesson today you will hear about the first offerings brought to the Lord and the first murder. You will learn that God is more concerned about our relationship with Him as His children than with what we bring to Him.

We do know from our previous lesson that God shed the blood of animals in order to use their skins to clothe Adam and Eve. That was the first picture of Christ's death and His blood that was shed to cover our sins. The New Testament Book of Hebrews draws lessons from the Old Testament. It contrasts the requirements of God under the Old Covenant with His requirements under the New Covenant. And it helps us understand what the first family knew about God. Hebrews teaches plainly that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22). In the Old Testament, this referred to the blood of animals. In the New Testament we learn that Christ's blood was shed once and for all for sin, so that animal sacrifices have no meaning any more.

So getting back to Genesis, we see that Adam and Eve had their first son and named him Cain. In time they had another son they called Abel. Cain became a farmer, tilling the soil, while Abel became a herdsman—working with animals. The writer of Genesis does not fill in the details of how the boys grew up or exactly how their parents taught them about God. We do know that one day, when it was time to bring a sacrifice to the Lord, Cain decided to bring some fruits of the soil as an offering as he was a farmer. His brother Abel also brought an offering from the firstborn of his flock.

The Lord was pleased with Abel's offering, but He was not happy with Cain's. The contrast is not between the offering of plant life and an offering of animal life. The reason for the acceptance of Abel's offering is that he offered it by faith. The writer to the Hebrews says, "By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings" (Heb. 11:4). Matthew, one of Jesus' disciples, records in his gospel account that even Jesus referred to Abel as a righteous man (Matt. 23:35). It seems that Cain's sacrifice was offered without faith, as just a ritual perhaps, and without the shedding of blood. The attitude and motivation of a person's heart is very important when they are giving to God.

Cain became angry when he saw that God did not accept his sacrifice. We see that Cain had known what was right and had not followed what he had been taught. God said, "Cain, why are you angry? If you simply do what is right, you will be accepted. But if you do not, sin is waiting for you. It is crouching by your door, ready to pounce and become your master. Instead, you need to take control of it!"

A few days later, Cain deliberately deceived his brother, inviting him to go for a walk in the field. While they were there Cain suddenly turned, attacked his unsuspecting brother, and

killed him. Later that day God asked Cain, “Where is your brother?” God already knew what had happened, but He was giving Cain an opportunity to confess his sin.

But instead Cain lied: “I do not know! Am I supposed to watch over him all the time?”

“Oh Cain, what have you done?” God replied in an anguished voice. “Listen! Your brother’s blood is crying to me from the soil. As a farmer you have loved this ground, but from now on it is cursed because it contains your brother’s blood. You will continue to work the field, but it will no longer respond to you and give you its best. You will become a restless wanderer.”

Cain fell down and cried out in self-pity: “God, your punishment is too severe! You are taking away my land and Your presence! I will be aimless and separated from everyone else. Eventually they will hunt me down and kill me.” Even though Cain had no remorse for what he had done, God extended mercy and let him live.

God also put a warning mark on Cain and said, “Anyone who kills Cain will suffer for it seven times over!” When he heard that, Cain went away from the presence of the Lord. His lack of faith, jealousy, deception, murder, anger, lying, and self-seeking resulted finally in his total separation from God. A self-centered person who acts without faith, always seeking his own concerns and wanting to do things his own way, will eventually self-destruct. God allows people to choose to obey or to disobey, but He holds them accountable for disobedience.

This story is important because it shows God is not concerned mainly with the offerings we bring Him, but with the condition of our heart and our relationship with others. We should always be watching out for sin in our lives because it can destroy us, but God still wants to protect us from its consequences. He stands ready to extend grace and have mercy on those who confess their sins and call on Jesus.

The truths this story teaches are that it is not possible to hide our sin from God and our sin separates us from God. He will hold us accountable for them.

Let's review this lesson—

1. Why do you think God was more pleased with Abel’s offerings?
A. [Pause for 8 seconds] If you said "because he brought the correct gift and offered it by faith to God," you are right.
2. Who was Cain really angry with, God or Abel?
A. [Pause for 8 seconds] If you said "With God, because God saw his lack of true faith," you are correct.
3. Why do you think God asked Cain, “Where is your brother?”
A. [Pause for 8 seconds]. If you said, "He wanted to give Cain the chance to confess his sin," you are correct.
4. Think about how Cain’s one choice to disobey led to many other wrong choices, until he left the presence of the Lord.

Your assignment for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened; see the events in your mind. Then tell the story in

your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and retell it until you feel sure you are repeating the circumstances and actions correctly. You should spend at least 45 minutes in learning the story. You may need to have someone check that you are telling the story correctly.

Discuss with your family what kind of offerings God is expecting of you today. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you examine the motives of your heart. Are you presenting your gifts to God by faith? Are you giving offerings just to be seen by others? What attitude of giving does God bless? The Apostle Paul wrote that “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7).