

Cain Murders His Brother

From the earliest times man has felt a compulsion to worship God. Without directives man would be left to his own devices on how to do that. From the time of Adam and Eve's disobedience and expulsion from the garden, the Bible does not reveal any communication to them from God. Thus, we do not know whether Adam and Eve, or their sons, had any instruction on what to do when they worshipped. What we do know is that Abel was a "keeper of sheep" and Cain was a "tiller of the ground," one was a shepherd and the other a farmer. Apparently both recognized a need to worship God and each brought an offering of their labors. Without any explanation given, God rejected Cain's offering, but accepted Abel's. Genesis 4:4-5 records that the Lord "respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering."

Understandably, God's rejection of Cain's offering was disturbing to him. Cain became angry and was jealous of the favor that his brother found with the Lord. In verses 6 and 7 God speaks to Cain to comfort him, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance, fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?" The implication of the text is that Cain has only to change His offering and it, too, would be accepted. Cain could have taken the fruit of his labors in exchange for an animal from his brother's flocks. He then would have had the appropriate offering to God. Instead, Cain chooses to remain jealous, to let rage grow inside of him until, horror of horrors, he kills his brother Abel. We can see Satan at work again, as he was with Adam and Eve, urging Cain to gratify his jealous anger. It would have been a much simpler matter to modify his offering to God. He chooses, instead, for the satisfaction of his evil impulses, to commit murder. What could account for such a horrible decision?

Cain was born a creature with a free will and a very clear moral choice was set before him. Cursed with the knowledge of good and evil, and faced with a very certain choice between right and wrong, Cain simply chose the wrong. Cain became the third victim of sin.

The tragedy is magnified because Cain was told in advance that his task was to master the temptation to do evil; that while good was set before him to do, evil was there also. God said to Cain in verse 7, "And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." Clearly there was a choice before Cain and clearly he chose wrongly. Cain sinned and now must face the consequences of his act.

The account of Cain and Abel, two real people in real time, albeit some thousands of years ago, illustrates the great challenge for mankind throughout history, today, and forever. God is the embodiment of all things good. Satan is the embodiment of all things evil. These two forces are irreconcilably poised against each other. We are free will agents created in the midst of this maelstrom of evil against good, and we must make a choice between them. If we do well we will be accepted; if we do not, "sin lies at the door." If we chose evil, we will be held accountable for our actions. Like Cain, we have no one to blame but ourselves. Cain failed miserably. We fail miserably also. We may not commit murder, but

neither do we live perfectly before God. What are we to do when we separate ourselves from our Creator because of our bad choices? The answer to that is a central message of the Bible. We cannot do anything except reach out and take God's offer of grace. But first there is much to consider in God's work with His creation. If you, the reader, are interested in pursuing God's offer of grace faster than we proceed in these articles, contact us by one of the means below.

Otherwise, wait as the story unfolds. Next week we will consider the headlong decline of man from Cain and Abel to Noah and the Great Flood. [Read Genesis 6-10 and we will see you in a couple of weeks.]