

Lesson 21 – Genesis 4:1-8

The Lesson of Cain and Abel

There have been many interpretations and explanations of the difference between the offerings of Cain and Abel and why only Abel's was accepted.

Cain's offering was a grain offering; Abel's was a blood offering

Cain's vocation as a farmer was inferior to Abel's as a shepherd

God's providential election determined that Abel was to be accepted, while Cain would be rejected

Cain's offering was just of the "fruit of the ground"; Abel's was "of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions"

God is not regarding the sacrifices in a vacuum; Moses contrasts God's regard for "Abel and his offering" vs "Cain and his offering."

Hosea 6:6 – For I desire ***steadfast love and not sacrifice***, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings

1 Samuel 15:22 – Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to ***obey is better than sacrifice***, and ***to listen than the fat of rams***.

1 John 3:12 – We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? ***Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous***.

Martin Luther: "The faith of the individual was the weight which added value to Abel's offering"

Cain responds to God's disapproval with anger, sadness, and despondency

What is God's counsel to Cain in light of this?

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Genesis 4:6-7 – The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.”

Cain is presented with a crossroads of sorts: are you going to do what is good or what is evil?

“If you do well, will you not be accepted?”

NASB – “If you do well, will your countenance not be lifted up?”

There are two masters vying for Cain’s heart in this moment: the God of the universe and the personification of sin

God’s desire for Cain is to accept him and lift his countenance; Sin’s desire for Cain is to rule over him

God desires relationship with Cain; Sin desires mastery of him

To whom do you turn when you sin?

Do you turn inward and wallow in self-condemnation?

Do you throw off all restraint and dive deeper into sin?

Or do you repent and run to your Savior who has called you to himself and who loves you with a holy love?

The reality of sin demands that we have both a proper hamartiology (understanding of sin) and a proper theology (understanding of God).

The danger of “Christian Perfectionism”

The danger of underestimating God’s holiness

Parents: We must raise our children with a right understanding of God’s holiness, which he calls his children to emulate, while at the same time introducing them to the very same God who will rescue them from their sins and in whom there is no condemnation.

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Sadly, Cain does not heed God's counsel; he lets his bitterness fester, he hates his brother because he does what is right, he chooses the sin that is crouching at his door, and in his envy, he murders Abel.

At the end of the day, the difference between love and hatred is the difference between giving and demanding life.

Lesson 21.5 – 1 John 3:11-15

In this passage, we John recaps Jesus's "Farewell Discourse" (John 13-16), drawing also from the passage we just studied, Genesis 4.

During this discourse, Jesus lays out two clues as to whether someone is a genuine disciple, based in interpersonal feelings between people:

1. True believers love one another (John 13:35)
2. The world hates true believers (John 15:18)

Why does the world hate believers?

Because they hated Jesus (John 15:18-20)

Because doers of evil hate doers of good (John 15:24, 1 John 3:12)

An obedient life is one way God brings conviction to the unbelievers around us.

Just as Cain had a choice in how to respond to the guilt felt as a result of seeing Abel's good works and acceptance, every person must choose what to do with the recognition of the corrupting

1. Dive deeper into sin and hatred of the one inspiring the conviction
2. Turn in repentance, forsake sin, submit to God, love Him and his people

v. 15 – "Everyone who hates his brother"???

The church visible vs. invisible

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Do you love your brothers and sisters in the church?

When they do well, do you rejoice with them or resent them?

When they stumble, do you tend towards condescension or compassion?

Does your heart towards them reflect the heart of Jesus?