

Title: The Only Two Religions
Text: Genesis 4: 1-12
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Genesis 4: 1: And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. 2: And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3: And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4: And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. 6: And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? 7: If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. 8: And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. 9: And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? 10: And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. 11: And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; 12: When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

Adam and Eve had many more children by this time. But the Spirit of God singles out Cain and Abel to contrast the two ways in which sinners attempt to come to God. Cain and Abel were not young boys at this time. They were heads of their households, with wives and children, and occupations.

God has always had a set time to worship him. And God appoints the set place where he will be worshipped.

Genesis 3: 24: So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

All of that pictured Christ. Like as the cherubims overlooked the mercy seat, so the cherubims overlooked this place of worship. The flaming sword is an emblem of the Shekinah glory, God's presence. Christ is the Way, Christ is the Keeper of the Way and Christ is the Life. God's appointed place of worship is in Christ wherever God has raised up a preacher to preach Christ.

Cain brought his works as an offering unto the LORD—the *fruit of the ground*. Abel offered Christ alone unto the LORD—the *firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof*. The LORD received Abel and his offering. But the LORD rejected Cain and his offering.

Cain became angry and his countenance fell. The LORD said to Cain, "*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?*" The LORD was saying, "If thou come to me through faith in Christ, shalt thou not be accepted." The LORD said, "*And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.*" The LORD was saying, "If thou dost not come through faith in Christ then whose fault is it? Who is to blame? It is no one's fault but your own."

Yet, instead of heeding the LORD's reproof, Cain murdered his brother, Abel. The first murder in the world was by a will-worshipper who murdered his brother because his brother was a worshipper of Christ by God's grace through God-given faith.

1 John 3: 11: For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12: Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. 13: Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

All religion is summed up right here. Every sinner comes to God one of these two ways: either the way of works—this is the way of Cain—"Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD", or the way of grace through faith in Christ—this is the way of Abel—"Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof." All religion is the religion of works or the religion of grace through faith in Christ. There is no middle ground. Grace and works cannot mix. We either come one way or the other.

Romans 11: 6: And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

Sinner, which of these ways are you attempting to come to God?

Proposition: A sinner can only worship God, and be accepted of God, by God's grace through faith in the blood of Christ Jesus his Son.

Divisions: 1) Contrast in the men; 2) Contrast in their sacrifice 3) God's word to Cain

CONTRAST IN MEN

Genesis 4: 4:..And the LORD had respect UNTO ABEL and to his offering: 5: But UNTO CAIN and to his offering he had not respect.

Some think the difference was entirely in the offering. Indeed, there was an enormous difference in the offering. But that was due to a difference within the men themselves. What was it?

It was not a difference made by their first birth. They were both born of Adam's corrupt seed. Both came forth dead in trespasses and in sins.

It was a difference the grace of God made. The difference in these two sinners is that God gave Abel faith in Christ and Cain, left to himself, did not have faith in Christ.

Hebrews 11:4: 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 [his offerings]: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Faith is the gift of God given through the preaching of the gospel.

Romans 10: 13: For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14: How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15: And how shall they preach, except they be sent?...17: So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Brethren, wouldn't you have liked to hear the sermons Adam preached to all his children! I can hear Adam declaring, "God told me, 'Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' (Gen 2: 16-17) Yet, I disobeyed God and ate. It is because of me that your mother and I died and so did you and all my children and my children's children. It is because of my transgression that sin entered in and death by sin and so death passed upon all men for in me all have sinned." (Rom 5: 12)

Then I can hear Adam declare the good news, saying, "Oh, but God came to me in sovereign grace when I was hiding from God in the trees of the garden. God revealed to me my sin and my curse. Then he promised to give me, and all his elect, redemption in the woman's Seed, the Christ, whose heel the serpent will bruise but whose head Christ will crush. He preached the gospel to us!" (Gen 3: 15)

I am sure Adam declared how God then covered his nakedness, saying, "Then showing his irresistible grace, he stripped me and your mother of our fig leaves. He showed us a type of the atonement made by Christ as the Substitute of his people by slaying a lamb in our place. From that lamb, God made a covering of the skins, picturing Christ our Righteousness. Then God covered us showing a picture of how he quickens his people, give his gift of faith in Christ and through faith imputes Christ's righteousness to us."

Then Adam must have declared the place of worship and how they were to come even as God showed him, saying, "Then God showed us that right here—between the cherubims—he will meet with us. But not without the blood of a lamb for without the shedding of blood is no remission of sins. Life is in the blood. Children, if you will be accepted of God, you must come to God's appointed place, Christ the mercy seat. You must come with the blood of a lamb, believing on Christ alone."

As they heard Adam preach the gospel of Christ to them, God worked grace in Abel, giving him faith to believe God. But Cain, left to himself, showed what every sinner will do. He rejected the gospel. He would not with the blood of a lamb. Instead, he came with the works of his hands. Therefore, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Therefore, God received Abel but refused Cain.

CONTRAST IN OFFERINGS

Genesis 4: 3...Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

Cain was a tiller of the cursed ground.

Genesis 3: 17: And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of it* all the days of thy life; 18: Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 19: in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Our flesh is cursed ground. Every sinner, by nature, is a tiller of this cursed ground. Every sinner, by nature, tries to produce righteousness from this cursed flesh but it only produces briars and thorns.

Romans 7: 5: For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

Cain offered God the fruit of the ground—the dead fruit of his self-will; God declared he must come in the blood of the Substitute, but Cain came with something he imagined a little more dignifying than blood. Cain offered God his sinful pride—blood signifies the need of pardon for sin; but his pride would not let Cain confess his sin and need of pardon; in his pride, he trampled underfoot the blood of Christ. Cain offered God a blind eye, a fist of rebellion, a deaf ear, a lying tongue, a hard heart, that is, Cain offered God his sinful, corrupt flesh—"the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." (Is 1: 5)

Yet, through faith in Christ "Abel offered the Lord a firstling of the flock." Christ is the firstborn, without spot or blemish, the holy, harmless, undefiled GodMan Mediator. Christ is God providing himself a Lamb. Abel came with blood "for without the shedding of blood is no remission of sins." (Heb 9: 22) By coming with blood, Abel confessed his sin and his guilt; he confessed

his need of Christ the Substitute; he confessed his need of righteousness/justification; he confessed his need of redemption from the curse of the law by Christ being made a curse for him. He also offered *“the fat”* of his lamb, the excellency of Christ, picturing how *“Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”* (Eph 5:2) Abel brought the sacrifice God required which typified Christ who Able believed for righteousness, redemption, and acceptance with the holy Lord God.

And oh, what a contrast in the LORD’s response! —*“And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering.”* God accepted Abel in Christ the Beloved, fully justified, and complete in Christ! *“But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.”* Sinner, if you are trying to come to God by your works or by some goodness in you then you are offering to God the same offering as Cain! God will not have it!

It is God who gets the glory for choosing whom he will, not based on any good or evil in the sinner, that the purpose of God according to election might stand. Christ gets the glory for redeeming his people, making us the righteousness of God in him by Christ fulfilling the law for us. It is the Spirit of God who gets the glory for regenerating his people and giving us faith in Christ.

Titus 3: 5: Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6: Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

Ephesians 2: 8: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we [shall] walk in them.

Isaiah 48:11: For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

“Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.” (Jer 13:16 AV)

GOD’S WORD TO CAIN

Genesis 4: 5:…And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. 6: And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? 7: If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.

Sinner, if you do not well, sin lieth at the door. What sin? What is it to do not well? What is this sin that lies at the door? Christ said it is not believing on Christ.

John 16: 8: And when [the Comforter] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9: Of sin, because they believe not on me;…

If any sinner’s countenance is fallen by hearing the gospel that God chose Christ to fulfill all righteousness for his people sin lies at the door; if a sinner’s countenance is fallen hearing that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes sin lies at the door; if a sinner’s countenance is fallen hearing that Christ is that Holiness without which no man shall see the LORD sin lies at the door. And the sin that lies at the door is the sin of unbelief: the sin of self-righteousness and self-sanctification. Therefore, anger at another is not the remedy. Be angry at yourself and repentant and cast your care on Christ.

The LORD says, *“If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?”* What is it to do well?

Micah 6: 8: He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly [with thy God], and to love mercy [with thy God], and to walk humbly with thy God?

Do justly with thy God by confessing your sin and declaring God just—*“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.”* (Ps 51: 4) God requires you to confess you are nothing, have nothing, can do nothing to please God.

Love mercy with thy God. How do I do that?—*“The publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”* (Lu 18: 13) To love mercy with God is to delight in salvation by grace in Christ not by our sacrifice—[Christ said] *“They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”* (Mt 9: 12) Sinner, it is not your sins that is keeping you from being accepted of God, it is that you will not let go of your self-goodness, your self-sacrifices, your self-righteousnesses and come empty delighting to be saved by God’s mercy alone!

Walk humbly with thy God. Cease the haughty arrogant demands toward God expecting God to accept you because of some work you have done and come to Christ bowed down, crying, *“Lord, IF THOU WILT, thou can’st make me clean.”* (Mt 8: 2)

Cain was angry because he would not come down off his high horse and submit himself in utter dependence upon the grace of God. This is what the LORD has showed you is good: *to do justly with God, to delight in the mercy of God in Christ, to submit yourself in humility to the Lord to do with you what he will!*

Sinner, come *“to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”* Abel’s blood cried for justice and vengeance, Christ blood cries for justice and mercy! Abel’s blood spoke for punishment, Christ’s for pardon; Abel’s blood spoke against his brother, Christ’s for his brethren; Abel’s blood demanded death,

Christ's blood demands life; Abel's blood cried out against Cain in his conscience, Christ blood speaks for us in our consciences; Abel's blood cried from the ground to God, Christ's blood speaks in heaven before God.

Hebrews 12:25: See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven.

1 John 1:7: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 8: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Amen!