

Subject: *Worship That Pleases God*

Scripture: *Genesis 4:1-7*

In Genesis 3 we learn about the first sin. Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command and ate the forbidden fruit. In Genesis 4 we don't have to read very far to see the effects of sin in the first children, Cain and Abel. In the first part of the chapter we learn about false religion and murder in the first family. Sin made its way to the next generation and God reveals what is going to happen throughout human history.

1. THE BIRTH OF CAIN AND ABEL

The name "Cain" sounds like the Hebrew word for get or acquire, and the name "Abel" means breath or vapor, and is translated "vanity" in Ecclesiastes and other places. So Cain's name reminds us that life comes from God, and Abel's name reminds us that life is brief.

It is clear is that Cain and Abel inherited a sin nature when they were born, and there was evidence of that very soon in the chapter.

Psalms 51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

2. THE WORK OF CAIN AND ABEL

Abel was a shepherd and Cain was a farmer. Many young men would follow in their footsteps. Both of them were common occupations in Bible times. Work was not a punishment from God. Adam had work to do before he sinned. Work is part of God's will. It is a blessing, not a curse. *Exodus 20:9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work.*

3. THE WORSHIP OF CAIN AND ABEL

Before we look at the way they worshiped God, let's consider this question: what did these young men know about God? What would they have learned from their parents?

- They knew there was only one true God
- They knew that God created everything
- They knew that God was sovereign (in control)
- They knew that God was serious about His commands
- They knew that God judges sin (they understood what happened in the garden)
- They knew that God provided a covering for sin (the coats of skins)
- They knew that God is to be worshiped (they brought offerings to God)

The phrase in 4:3, *in process of time* literally means "at the end of days," that is, at a set time. This may refer to the seventh day that God set apart as holy (Gen. 2:3).

- They brought different offerings to God. This is the first recorded act of worship in the Bible. The word for offering (Heb. *minha*) is used to express thanksgiving, to make reconciliation, and to accompany worship. In this instance it probably involved all three (an offering of thanksgiving, of reconciliation, and of worship).

Cain brought the fruit of the ground and Abel brought a firstborn sheep from his flock. At first this might seem like the thing to do, since Cain was a farmer and Abel was a shepherd. They just offered whatever they had available, but there's obviously more to it.

4. THE RESPONSE OF GOD

The Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He rejected Cain and his offering. No reason is given for the acceptance and rejection and the Bible doesn't say how God indicated His approval and rejection. But somehow Abel knew that God was pleased with his offering and Cain knew that God was not pleased with his offering. We see the reaction of Cain in verse 5. He was very angry and dejected.

5. THE PATIENCE AND GRACE OF GOD

God asked Cain why he was angry and dejected (vs. 6), and then God urged Cain to offer the acceptable sacrifice. God assured him that if he would repent he would be accepted. God gave him a promise. It was a promise of forgiveness and acceptance. God also gave Cain a warning. Sin is crouching at the door like a vicious animal ready to overpower him. Cain had the opportunity to rule over sin and do what God wanted. God made the appeal to Cain's will. This was a choice that Cain had to make ("If you do well...if you don't do well").

6. THE WORSHIP THAT PLEASES GOD

This is the main lesson in the text. God has the right to be worshiped, and He has the right to be worshiped in the way He chooses. Cain and Abel both knew the kind of offering God wanted. Here is what the Bible says...

***Hebrews 11:3-4**³ Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.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: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

***Romans 10:17** So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Faith is our response to believe and obey what God says. You can't have faith unless God first speaks. God speaks to us in Scripture and tells us what to believe and obey.

Cain thought his way was good enough for God, but Abel believed God's way was right and brought a blood sacrifice. The Book of Jude refers to false teachers and says "they have gone in the way of Cain." The way of Cain is the way he wanted to worship. The way of Cain is the way of false religion. It is the way of self-will and self-promotion and self-righteousness. Cain thought surely God will be pleased because I've brought the best I have and that's good enough. This is the way of religion. It is self-centered and based on doing whatever we want.

False religion is self-centered. True worship is God-centered.

False religion comes to God the way man chooses. True worship comes to God in the way He chooses. False religion displeases God. True worship pleases God.

The Christian faith was known as "the Way" in the days of the apostles. There is only one way to salvation and that is through the sacrifice of Christ. There is only one way to worship God and that is through the sacrifice of Christ. There is the way of false religion and the way of true salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. There is the way of Cain and the way of the cross.