

MEN AND WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

NCTM. Thursday a.m. Class Sept. 9th. 1993. G.C. Bingham

Third Term Course: Men and Women of the Bible

Study Seven: The Two Brothers-One Who Loved Much & One Who Didn't

Introduction: Passages (i) Genesis 4:1-24; (ii) I John 3:8-18; (iii) Hebrews 11:4.

1. The True Worship of God

Whence came the idea of offering sacrifices to God as Cain and Abel did? It must have been taught to them, whether in Eden or not. Sacrifice is a *way* of worship but worship is total, every moment of life for it is giving *worth* to God, as well as to Man and the creation. The idea of the human race being abandoned because of its fall is untrue. Genesis 3:15 shows that hope was a gift from the first. The primal couple was ejected from Eden for its own good (3:22-24). Expelled from Eden, yet they were all-the couple and their children- 'in the presence of the Lord' (Gen. 4:14, 16). So then, the primeval family knew of sacrifice and its meaning. Sacrifice has the elements of fellowship with God (cf. I Cor. 10:18-22), propitiation (I John 4:10; Lev. Chs 1-6; 17:11) and thanksgiving. Some insist that Cain should have brought a bloody sacrifice (cf. Heb. 9:22). If so, then Cain- 'a tiller of the field'-would not barter with his brother for an animal victim. Perhaps this was from pride, but in any case it would appear it was the *attitude* of Cain that made his offering unacceptable (cf. Psa. 51:16-17).

2. Cain, the Man with the Uneasy Conscience

It is thought by some, that Cain and Abel were twins, much the same as Esau and Jacob. The eldest son had primacy in the filial hierarchy. Cain was born of parents who had rebelled against God to go their own way, but in addition to the curse⁶, they were also given the Proto-Evangel of Genesis 3:16, so that there was hope for them if they would take it. It seems, in the mystery of God's sovereignty that in the one family there can be a prophet-Jesus called Abel that-and a murderer (I John 3: 10-11). That Cain was of Satan is clear from I John 3:10-11. Satan was 'a liar and a murderer from the beginning' (John 8:44). Cain's hatred of his brother was because of the righteousness of Abel (I John 3: 10-11).

3. Abel, the Man With the Clear Conscience

Abel offered up his sacrifice in faith. If he had been tutored by God, through his parents, then he knew the nature of God. I John 3:10 tells us he did works of righteousness and loved his brother. Jesus said that Abel was a prophet (Luke 11:49-51), And spoke of 'the blood of innocent Abel' (Matt. 23:35). Being a man who lived in God's law, worshipped God truly, and carried out his prophetic ministry he can be said to have lived with a clear conscience, and I John 3:10-11 tells us this was infuriating to Cain. A prophet is one who knows the mind of God and is His mouthpiece when and where directed to speak (Exod. 28-7:2).

⁶ Note that the ground was cursed (Gen. 3:17-19), not Adam and not Eve, although both would suffer in certain ways, Particularly then, both the serpent and the ground were cursed, but tradition has used the term to cover the primal couple, the land and the serpent.

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4. Sin, Conscience and Propitiation

Both brothers offered up their worship in order to please God (cf. Rom. 8:5-8). To know and keep the law of God is to offer true sacrifice only if the heart is obedient (Deut 30:6) and broken with its own sin (Psa. 51:16-17) for sacrifice without obedience is detestable to God (I Sam. 15:22). Hebrews 11:4 tells us Abel offered up his sacrifice 'by faith', and infers Cain did not. 'By faith' must mean 'faith in the God who provides propitiation (Lev. 17:11; cf. Luke 18:13, 'God be propitious to me, a sinner!')'. 'By faith' must ultimately mean 'By faith in the sacrifice of the Bruiser, the one crushing the serpent under his heel' (Gen. 3:15). It must mean, 'Faith in the propitiating nature of God'. We see the terrible nature of the 'sinful conscience' (cf. Heb. 9:14; 10:2, 22).

Propitiation was the way out for a conscience as evil as Cain's. God informed this first-born of men that if he 'did well' he would be accepted. His offering had been from a bad heart. John later stated what has always been known, 'Any one who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him' (I John 3:15). In the same context he shows that the sign of having passed from death to life is that we love the brethren.

All of this brings us to the fact that Abel knew of the true sacrifice from 'the Spirit of Christ within him' (I Pet. 1:10-12). He was martyr to the truth, that is a witness to God's grace in sacrifice, and of not loving one's life unto death' (Rev. 12:11), but the motivation for all this sprang from understanding the mystery of God's nature as love and His provision for propitiation out of that love.

5. The 'Mark of Cain' and the 'Mark of Abel'

In some sense the 'mark of Cain' must have been at once a sign of his being a murderer, but also of the protective grace of God. It was judgement and mercy, and mercy is excruciating to the impenitent. The mark protected him from human justice demands, but marked him for final judgement ('no murderer has eternal life abiding in him'). The number 666 in Revelation is the antithesis to the mark placed on the 144,000, the first being of the Beast ('your father the devil', 13:16-18) and the second being of 'his name and the Father's name' (14:1; cf. 7:3). In Genesis 9:5-6 it is shown that kill a man is to strike the image of God and so strike at God. Striking God through man can be done without bodily murder, by the use of gossip, slander and blasphemy as the New Testament shows.

6. The Variant Witness of the Two Men

So then, these two men go through history as 'armed men', the one marked as a person of sin, anger and hatred against both God and his brother, the other as being innocent (justified) and a person of righteous deeds and true love (*agape*). For one the brother's blood constantly cried from the ground (Lev. 17:11, 'the life is in the blood'), and for the other faith was always in 'the sprinkled blood [of Christ] that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel'. Abel died 'but through his blood he is still speaking'. This is the hour we need his speaking against all forms of homicide fratricide, matricide, patricide, genocide and suicide. It speaks not only against such evils, but it speaks for the supremacy and the eternal nature of true *love—agape*.