



The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering He did not look with favor.

– Genesis 4:4-5

Why did God accept Abel and his offering and reject his brother Cain's? And what can we learn from this tragic story that will guide us in our relationship with God today?

The Offerings

We don't know how Adam and Eve's two sons knew they should bring offerings to the Lord. We assume that their parents told them how God had sacrificed on their behalf after they sinned in the Garden. The real question is why God accepted Abel's offering and rejected Cain's. Was it because of the kind of offering, or their faith?

Abel raised flocks, and Cain grew crops. Abel brought the fat portions from the firstborn of his flocks. Cain, on the other hand, brought some of his crops. Many assume that Abel's sacrifice was accepted because it involved animal sacrifice and Cain's did not. But God looked much deeper than that. He looked at their hearts.

God saw the faith that motivated each sacrifice. Abel presented the first and best of what he had. Cain, on the other hand, presented some of his crops, or what one commentator described as leftovers. Hebrews 11:4 tells us that "By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did...and he was commended as a righteous man..."

The Choice

So, if God rejected Cain's offering, did God also reject Cain? No. Instead, God lovingly reached out to Cain and offered him a second chance. God told Cain that if he did what was right, he would be accepted. But if he didn't do what was right, "...sin is crouching at your door. It desires to have you, but you must rule over it." (Genesis 4:7)

God showed Cain his choices and the consequences of each. God portrayed sin like a lion about to pounce. But He told Cain he could rule over sin by choosing God's way instead of insisting on his own way. James 4:7 echoes this choice and shows us how to rule over sin: "Submit to God, resist the Devil, and he will flee from you."

Sadly, rather than accepting God's offer of transformation, Cain allowed sin to take over his heart. In jealousy, he murdered his brother, Abel. When God confronted him again, Cain remained defiant and unrepentant. As a result, God exiled him. But even in that punishment, God showed His grace by protecting Cain from being killed.

Our Options

Throughout this account, we see a loving, caring God who desires a closer relationship with us. Even when we reject Him, He continues to offer us His love and grace. The saddest verse in this account is Genesis 4:16: "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord." Here are some ways this account teaches us to remain in God's presence.

God looks at our heart. Abel's relationship with God and his sacrifice were based on faith. Cain's relationship with God was self-motivated. He chose to do things his way and defied God, even after God repeatedly offered His grace as a way back. Are you insisting on going your own way rather than God's today?

Sin is crouching at our door. Sin is a predator waiting to destroy us. This account shows that sin not only fractures our relationship with God, but it can also ruin our relationship with others. But we can rule over sin when we rely on God and resist sin's way. Are you using God's power instead of your own to fight your spiritual battles today?

God made the ultimate sacrifice. Cain's sacrifice of neatly arranged produce probably looked better than Abel's bloody dead lamb. But faith was what counted. One lamb for one man. Later, at Passover, it was one lamb for one family. Finally, on the cross, Jesus the Lamb of God sacrificed Himself to take away the sins of all mankind.

Have you asked Jesus to take away your sin? Or are you like Cain and still trying to cover your sin in your own way?



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