

Cain and Abel – “Sin is crouching at the door”

Gen 4:1-15 (read)

The common thought on the matter of why God rejected Cain’s offering is captured by H.C Trumbull in his book “The Blood Covenant” as follows: ...“the narrative shows Abel lovingly and trustfully reaching out to God with *substitute* blood, in order to be in covenant oneness with God; while Cain merely proffers a gift from his earthly possessions. Abel so trusts God that he gives *himself* to Him. Cain defers to God sufficiently to make a *present* to Him. The one shows unbounded faith; the other shows a measure of affection or reverence”.

Do you hold to this thought? Is this really why God rejected Cain’s offering?

We want to dig a little deeper and see if there may be another reason... possibly the real reason.

First let’s look at the different Hebrew words that are used in relation to “offerings” and what these are used for.

The sacrifices prescribed by the Mosaic Law are included under two classes:

- 1 Those offered for the sake of communion with Jehovah. These are propitiatory, they were intended to lead the people to obtain pardon and be brought into communion with God. They include:
 - sin offerings
 - trespass offerings.

- 2 Those offered in communion with Him. These were offered by people walking in communion with God, those who had already been admitted to this state of grace. These included:
 - burnt offerings,
 - peace offerings - including thank offerings, votive offerings and freewill offerings
 - meat (meal) and drink offerings.

Sin Offering – (חטאת) “ghattat” – means ‘offence’ – (Lev 4:2,3 5:1-6) This offering was for a general ‘clean up’ for sins committed unintentionally, or in error. This offering took place for all the people at festivals such as New Moon, Passover, Pentecost, Feast of trumpets, Feast of Tabernacles and Day of Atonement.

Trespass/Guilt Offering – (אשם) “asham” – means ‘fault’ – (Lev 5:15, 17-19 6:1-7 19:20-22) Specific offering to reconcile one for wrong doing. This offering was to be brought by the person to the priest who would sacrifice the animal and make atonement.

These offerings required the shedding of blood for atonement (Lev 17:11, Heb 9:22). For the sin offering the poor could bring fine flour (Lev 5:11). That’s why Heb 9:22 includes the word ‘almost’.

Burnt Offering – (עלה) “olah” – means ‘whole burnt offering’ – (Gen 22:2 Ex 18:12, 29:18) It was to be wholly and entirely consumed and the smoke ascend to God. Symbolises the entire surrender to God of the individual or congregation. God’s acceptance gave renewal and sanctification to a course of life pleasing to God. It had no reference to atonement or forgiveness of sin. It could only be offered by those who retained their standing in the covenant.

Peace Offering – (זבח + שלם) “zebach + shelem” – means ‘sacrifice of peace’. This was offered in communion with God. This required animal sacrifice as zebach comes from the root word that means to slaughter for sacrifice. It always followed the other sacrifices. It was divided into the three parts:

Thank offering – zebach hattodah – sacrifice of thanks (Lev 7:12, 22:29)

Votive Offering – zebach neder – sacrifice of a vow (Nu 6:14, 15:3)

Freewill offering – zebach nedabah – freewill offering. (Lev 7:16, 22:18, 21)

These all served to establish the Hebrew people more firmly in the fellowship of the divine grace. In times of blessing they also were offered to say thanks to God.

Meal/Grain Offering – (מנחה) – “minghah” – means ‘a gift, tribute, grain offering’. Ex 29:41

Drink Offering – (נסך) – “nesek” – means a ‘drink offering’ or ‘libation’. (Ex 29:40)

The meal and drink offerings were analogous to that of offering tithes (firstfruits and the show bread). 1 Chr 29:10-22. The person recognises the sovereignty of God and His bounty in the bestowal of earthly blessings by dedicating to Him the best of his gifts. Flour is the main support of life, oil symbolises richness and wine symbolises vigour and refreshment.

Wave/Heave Offering - (תנופה) – “tenuphah” – means ‘swinging, waving, wave offering’. (Ex 29:24, 26, 27). This offering was voluntary or in compliance with some part of the law. Presentation of belongings to Jehovah, not as a sacrifice, but as contributions for religious purposes – erection or maintenance of the sanctuary or maintenance of the priests.

Other offerings included:

An Offering – (מנחה) – “minghah” – means ‘a gift, tribute, offering’. (Gen 4:3,4,5)

An Offering – (אשה) – “ishsheh” – means an offering made by fire’. (Ex 29:18, 25, 41 Lev 1:9 7:5)

An Offering – (קרבן) – “qorban” – means ‘offering, oblation’. (Lev 1:2,10, 13, 14)

The Offering – (תרומה) – “terumah” – means ‘contribution, offering’ (Ezr 8:25)

Sacrifice – (קטר) – “Qatar” – means ‘to make sacrifices smoke’. Ex 30:20.

You may have noticed the word “minghah” is used for the ‘grain/meal offering’, where it signifies the best of a person’s gifts brought to God in recognition of His blessings, and it is the word used in Gen 4:3-5.

This word “minghah” is used for :

A gift: Gen 32:13, 18, 20, 21 Gen 33:10 Gen 43:11, 15, 25, 26

A tribute: 2 Sam 8:2, 6 2 Kings 17:3,4

An offering to God: 1 Chr 16:29 Isa 1:13 Jer 17:26

It has no reference to atonement or forgiveness for sin. These are offerings, gifts or tributes to God that express the person’s recognition of God’s sovereignty and His goodness and are an expression of love and appreciation. The gifts are not blood related. The person gives his best gifts out of whatever he or she has.

This was the type of offering Cain and Abel were offering. Cain as a tiller of the ground brought of the fruit of the ground and Abel as a keeper of flocks brought of his sheep. God’s rejection of Cain’s offering is not related to blood sacrifices at all.

So why then did God reject Cain’s offering?

Let’s look at the Gen 4:3-15 passage.

There was nothing wrong with Cain’s offering in and of itself. The fruit and veges were good. What was wrong was the motive of his heart.

Abel had a pure heart, Hebrews 11:4 says he was ‘righteous’, which means his heart was right before God. Abel brought an offering with the right heart attitude, one of total devotion, thanksgiving and love for God. Abel was like a man who absolutely loves his lady friend and wants to marry her and offers her an engagement ring, an offering, that says this is a token of my love and absolute devotion to you and I want to be yours and for you to be mine so we can enjoy one another and live our lives together in happiness. To which she replies, yes I know you are totally devoted to me, I’ve witnessed your love and kindness and absolute integrity in our relationship, Yes I want to accept the ring and your pledge to marry me.

What about Cain. Look at [1 John 3:11,12](#) and [Jude 3-16](#). Cain had a heart full of evil and when he presented his offering it was from a heart of hypocrisy. But he could not fool God for:

1 Sam 16:7 says *...“for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”*

Cain was like a man who wants to get married, probably because he thinks he will then have someone to cook, wash and iron his clothes and generally run around caring for him, so he offers his girl friend an engagement ring. He gets a real fancy one too just to make sure she says yes. But she knows he has

been having affairs with other girls and has lied to her on numerous occasions. She replies to him, “no chance will I marry you, this ring is nothing other than a bribe”. She rejects him outright.

God saw and knew the condition of Cain’s heart, a heart full of selfishness, deceit, compromise and grudges. So He rejected Cain’s “bribe” for His love. Cain was (v7) not “doing well (good, righteous)”.

Abel was dedicated to God. His heart was whole. Cain represented those whose religion is halfhearted.

When God spoke to Cain in Verse 5-7 he asked Cain what his problem was. Cain probably said, “oh you just favour Abel because he’s your little goodie two shoes. He’s always the favoured one and I always get the rough end of the stick”. He was simply revealing the true condition of his heart.

God reveals three things about the sin in Cain’s life:

1. **Sin crouches** – it tries to hide from you but it’s there ‘at the door’.
2. **It will get you** – ‘its desire is for you’, it is powerful and destructive and after you
3. **But you must master it** – there is hope for the defeat of sin if you are repentant

Sin Crouches:

Look at a cat approaching a mouse or a lion stalking a antelope. It flattens itself out against the floor, it makes itself look smaller than it is, it tries to hide from its prey. Sin crouches – it tries to camouflage itself, and to make itself look smaller than it is, it tries to hide in the recesses of your heart.

The problem was one of underestimation of the predatory power of sin. Cain did not “see” the condition of his heart. He did not see or acknowledge the sin of hate for his brother that lurked in his heart.

Do we fob off ‘little’ sins or habits? Do we bring offerings, prayers, service to God but don’t back these up with our lives and our all? Are we totally dedicated to God, do we walk in integrity, or are these offerings just a bribe?

The sin (bad attitudes and habits, selfishness, etc) in a person’s life always looks smaller to him or her than to those who are close to you. If you want an honest look into your heart ask someone close to you what they see.

Do we have the attitude, “oh I’ll take care of it later sometime, it’s not as bad as all that”. Oops we have just helped it crouch lower and smaller. But it’s there, ready to pounce!

It will get you:

When you sin your sin takes on a life of its own and it seeks to devour you. When you tell a lie (to yourself about your sin or to others about anything) it does not stop there. You have to tell another lie, and another, and on and on to cover the first, and second and subsequent lies. Your sin will get you.

But you must master it:

There is hope. God offers Cain hope not condemnation.

God says to Cain, "Let's think about this matter. Do you not see that your real enemy is not Abel, but rather it is the sin in you? Your selfishness, your grudges and unforgiveness; don't you see them? Cain you can deal with it.

You're not miserable because of what Abel has done to you, or any unfair favour you think he has been shown. It's due to your reaction to what has been done to you that is chewing you up. It's your attitude. You can and must deal with it. There is hope.

When God asked Cain why he was angry it was not because God did not know. It was to give Cain an opportunity to acknowledge his sin and repent. But Cain does not repent. He kills his brother and faces the punishment.

Again God asks Cain where his brother is, not to find out his whereabouts but to give Cain an opportunity to repent.

Heb 12:24 ... *"But you have come ... to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel."*

Jesus blood says, "I have paid the price, you are forgiven" – all other bloods call out in the name of justice get the person condemned. Jesus blood cries out for mercy. His blood is for you.

Cain is 'marked'. Even though he is not showing and remorse or repentance for his heart condition, God's love for Him is unchanged. God loves him and 'marks' him showing His grace towards Cain, hoping that at some stage Cain will repent.

1 Sam 15:22 ... *"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice"*

Ps 51:17 ... *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise".*

Ps 51:6 ... *"Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being,
And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom".*

Sin crouches

Its desire is for you

But you must master it.