

Adam and Eve's children begin to sin against each other

Adam's sin leads on to murder between brother and brother (Genesis 4:1–16) ^{☐1}, and then to the decay of society. ^{☐2} The world continues under a reign of death ^{☐3} and then becomes vulnerable to demonic powers. ^{☐4} Sin operates in many directions. At first it results in a wrong relationship to God. Eve and then Adam refused the rule of God in their lives. Then sin damages us within. After Adam sinned he showed fear and guilt. Then the power of sin extends outwardly. In the story of Cain and Abel, there is hatred and animosity and jealousy reaching out to others. Once Adam and Eve had sinned against God, their children began to sin against each other.

^{☐1} 4:1-16
^{☐2} 4:17-26
^{☐3} 5:1-32
^{☐4} 6:1-8

1. The human race divides in two

1. **The human race divides into two.** One can see the 'seed of the woman', a section of the human race who would conquer the serpent. The 'seed' is both One and it is many. It is the Saviour and it is all of His people. There is also the 'seed of the serpent', a section of the human race who would be allied to the serpent and his hatred of God. Eve has two children. ^{☐1} One is acceptable to God; the other is not. ^{☐2}

^{☐1} 4:1-2a
^{☐2} 4:4-5

2. Everyone is aware of God

2. **Everyone is aware of God.** Both sons in the family of Adam and Eve felt the need to worship God. The saved and the lost, those who believe in a Saviour and those who do not, both parts of the human race, want to worship God. Cain brings an offering, Abel does the same. ^{☐1} Even ungodly people want God's help.

^{☐1} 4:2b-4a

3. Two ways to worship

3. **Everyone falls into one of two ways of worshipping God.** Here are two brothers. Their circumstances are similar. They are children of the same parents. Yet one is acceptable to God; the other is not. ^{☐1} What makes the difference?

^{☐1} 4:4,5

Abel

• The right way – God accepts

Consider **Abel**. He brings something from the flock, and God accepts him and approves of his offering. Abel wants to worship God, so he feels he should bring an animal, sacrifice it, and approach God in that way. He has faith in his heart that this is what God wants. ^{☐1}

^{☐1} Hebrews 11:4

• A substitute for sins

He feels that he needs a substitute. He takes an animal and kills it, and he comes to God in this way. The idea came from what God had done according to Genesis 3:21. God had killed an animal and covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve. By the death of an animal came a covering of their shame. Abel follows this hint from God. He wants his shame to be covered also. He is aware of his sinfulness. He feels that an animal would be a good substitute. The animals were made on the same day as man, on the 'sixth day'. Man and the animals have a lot in common. Abel believes that an animal will act as a substitute for men – just as God suggested.

He feels that sin deserves to be punished. The death of this animal will serve as a sign that sin should be punished. Abel was admitting his need. He has faith in an atonement. The wages of sin is death ^{☐1}, but he believes the animal's death will be accepted for him. So the animal dies for the sins of Abel, and God allows Abel to approach him in this way. Abel is believing that God will accept him

^{☐1} 3:19

• **A picture of what Jesus would do for us**

if he has faith in the death of a substitute.

God accepted animal-sacrifice before Jesus came. The animal-sacrifice is a picture of what God will do through Jesus. Abel was the one who started by faith the sacrificial system, and he expressed his faith in this way. It pointed to the future. Jesus is our substitute. He lived the life we should have lived. He died as if He were a sinner. He had done nothing wrong, but He was dying in our place. The way of salvation is to have faith in a substitute, to trust in One who has lived for us and died for us. As soon as we trust that substitute we are acceptable to God.

Cain

• **Salvation by works**

Now consider **Cain**. If an animal spoke of substitutionary punishment, what did the fruit of the ground speak of? It spoke of hard work! God had said that the fruit of the ground could only come 'in the sweat of your face'. ^{¶1} Cain wanted to worship God, but he brought the fruit of the ground. There was no question of the death of a substitute in that. Vegetable-offering is not a good substitute for man, and cannot forfeit its life. On the other hand growing food from the ground was associated with a lot of toil. ^{¶2} God had emphasized that very point. Cain's offering was an expression of salvation by works! It was his way of expressing his feeling that if he consecrated his labours to God, God would accept him in that way. But this is the way of the 'seed of the serpent'. This is the religion of the 'natural man' who wants to justify himself before God by his own good works. But salvation is not by good works. ^{¶3} ^{¶4} Cain is saying to God 'I have done all this for you. Won't you receive me because of this hard work that I am presenting to you?'

¶1 3:18-19

¶2 3:18-19

¶3 Ephesians 2:8-10

¶4 Romans 3:20, 22-24, 28, 4:4-6

• **The wrong way not accepted by God**

There are two types of religion. All man-made religion begins by 'justification by good works'. Cain's approach to God is not a matter of faith. He brings an offering symbolizing his efforts and his good deeds. He presents an entirely different kind of offering. But it is the wrong way to come. 'Good works' is not the way of approaching God.

• **We are accepted if we trust Jesus**

In Abel faith was expressed in animal-sacrifice. Abel was enabled to see that salvation would be by substitution. If we trust Jesus we shall be accepted too. God will acknowledge us and He will accept our offering – the blood of His Son.

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