

Worship 4
A Matter of Perspective
Gen. 4

Introduction:

1. One of the earliest accounts of worship is found in Gen. 4.
2. Gen. 4:4-5 says, "The Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering, but for Cain and for his offering the Lord had no regard."
3. Some are prone to judge God as unfair. It seems that both Cain and Abel are attempting to worship God. Shouldn't God have accepted Cain and his worship just as He did Abel's?
4. We are introduced to these two brothers with a description of their work and their worship.
5. Abel is a keeper of flocks, while Cain is a tiller of the ground.
6. Abel offers from the firstlings of his flock. Cain offers of the fruit of the ground.
7. No information is given about any instruction being given by God to either of them.
8. Heb. 11:4 says, "By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain."
9. Why did God regard the offering of Abel and not regard the offering of Cain?
10. Evidently, it was not because one was offering from the flock and the other from the ground. Grain offerings were certainly appropriate under the Mosaic period (ex. Num. 7, 28-29). So, what was the problem if not the offering itself?

Discussion:

- I. The problem is not with the offering, but with the worshiper.
 - A. The whole of the context sets a contrast between these two worshipers: Cain and Abel.
 1. "She gave birth to Cain."
 2. "She gave birth to Abel."
 3. Then comes the description of each.
 - a. Abel was a keeper of flocks.
 - b. But Cain was a tiller of the soil.
 4. Abel offered the firstlings of his flock.
 5. Cain brought an offering. Should it have been of the first fruits?
 - B. "The Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering the Lord had no regard."
 1. When you make an offering to the Lord is it of the "firstlings," "the first fruits"?
 2. There is a great deal of emphasis in Scripture on honoring the Lord by giving Him the very best one has to offer.
 - a. Abraham offered Isaac his special one (Gen. 22:2). This revealed that he "feared the Lord" (Gen. 22:12).
 - b. The first born, since the days of Egypt belonged to the Lord (Ex. 4:22-23; 13:2, 12, 14-15; 34:19; Num. 3:13). The first fruits were to be given to the Lord (Ex. 23:16, 19; 34:21-22, 26). Note Ex. 34:21 mentions working six days, but the seventh involves stopping and giving this day to the Lord (Ex. 20:8-11). It was not just about

the people having a day of rest, because they were tired, but about giving the day to the Lord. Is the “first day of the week” (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2) an offering of the “first fruits” to the Lord? Is this why it is called “the Lord’s day”? (Rev. 1:10).

- c. Offering the very best, the firstling of the flock or the first fruits, reflected honor and respect to the Lord (Mal. 1:6ff).
3. Offerings given grudgingly or under compulsion are not appropriate. Only offerings given willingly. Cf. 1 Cor. 9:7ff.
4. Sometimes “offerings” are “consumer” oriented. We give in order to get. We view our offerings as an investment in order to receive something from God or others? Cf. James 1:27-2:1ff.

II. Cain became very angry (at God) and his countenance fell (Gen. 4:5b). His response was not humility, remorse or repentance.

- A. Why was he angry? His investment did not pay off like he wanted.
- B. God did not regard him. Cain felt entitled. He thought God should have regarded him.
- C. God said, “If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up?” God was gracious to him. He called on him to do well.
 1. When Mary lavished Jesus with the costly vial of perfume she was lifted (Matt. 26:6ff). She stands in contrast to the disciples and Judas (26:14-15).
 2. Lavish gifts given without expecting/demanding in return are true gifts of love.
- D. Cain told Abel, not to commend him, not to learn from him, but to express his anger and to murder his brother who had respected God’s greatness with his lavish sacrifice (cf. 1 Jn. 3:12).
- E. When God confronted Cain he lied and claimed he didn’t know what happened to Abel (Gen. 4:9).
- F. When he was cursed he protested and thought God was unfair (Gen. 4:13). He blamed God for what had happened (Gen. 4:14).
- G. But God protected him from unfairness (Gen. 4:15).

III. Cain and Abel had two different perspectives about God and it affected their worship.

- A. Abel saw God as a good giver and responded with a lavish gift.
- B. Cain saw God as a withholder of good (Jude 11). He gave a gift in order to get what he wanted.
 1. He was angry when it didn’t work.
 2. He blamed God and accused him of being unfair, even though God was being gracious and protected him.
 3. He murdered Abel.

IV. What is the relationship between reverencing God and being terrified of God in these two worshipers?

- A. Abel is awed by God and offers his offering accordingly.

- B. Cain sees God as unfair and blames Him and acts as an angry murderer.
- C. These two perspectives affect our worship.
- D. How do you see God?

Conclusion:

1. Do not go the way of Cain.
2. Recognize the awesomeness of God and give Him the glory and honor that He deserves.
3. Give the firstlings of the flock, the first fruits of the ground, give the best that you have.
That's what He has given for you!