

CAIN . WHO WAS GIVEN
A SECOND CHANCE

And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. (Gen. 4:6-7)

The story of Cain has always intrigued humankind. He was the first baby to rest in the arms of an adoring mother. He never attended school or played with other children; he never saw a book. Houses were unknown until he helped his father to build one; it was made of leaves, ferns, branches of trees, and mud bricks baked in the sun to give strength to the structure. Unlike the children of today the boy never saw automobiles, airplanes, or ships. He had strong legs and sound feet; they were his only means of transportation. He knew nothing of foreign countries, radio, or television, and during his youth, never met a stranger. Adam, his father, was a quiet contemplative man, an intellectual genius. It is extremely difficult to understand how he named every creature in existence. Cain was amazed when his parents appeared to have dominion over the wild animals. If he had been able to write, he could have bequeathed to humankind invaluable knowledge.

What did Cain think when Abel, that strange little bundle of life, arrived to join the family? He had never seen a baby with tiny fingers and toes, and had never heard gurgles of childish delight or the wails of an infant announcing its hunger. Did he become jealous when his younger brother received increasing attention?

Cain's Childhood... Discerning

For several years that first child was compelled to live in comparative isolation; his parents and he were the sole occupants of an unexplored world. They lived in a garden, but later became nomads. The Bible says, "Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken." Adam and his wife often

reminisced, and when they sat with their sons, Cain and Abel became aware of the first events in history.

It is interesting that the boys eventually brought offerings to a God whom they had never seen. Cain, a farmer, brought of his produce; Abel, a shepherd, brought "of the firstlings of his flock." How did those boys learn of the privilege and necessity of bringing an offering to the Almighty? Why and how did Abel become aware that the offering of a lamb was the only means by which to find acceptance with God? Adam and Eve were the only teachers available, and during the evenings when work had been suspended, they spoke of the events that happened before their expulsion from their original home. Perhaps Eve was shy when she confessed their being without clothing until she sewed fig leaves together to make their first garments. She and her husband had been proud of their achievement until the voice of God filled them with dismay. Within moments they had become aware that their best efforts were insufficient; they remained naked in the sight of the Almighty. The listening sons might have asked, "But if your garments were useless, what did you do?" Did Adam reply, "Nothing! God did it for us. He slew one of His animals to obtain the material from which to make garments, which He offered to us. Boys, remember what you have been told."

Cain's Choice... Deciding

It has been estimated that between the birth of Cain and the murder of Abel was a period of 100 to 130 years, and since Adam begat sons

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and daughters (see Gen. 5:4) over a long period of time; the population of the earth increased enormously. It has been suggested by scholars that the inhabitants of the earth at the time of the first murder could have been approximately thirty-two thousand. Cain and Abel were mature men when they agreed to bring an offering to the Lord. There has never been evidence to prove Cain offered inferior produce; he probably brought the finest specimens of his agricultural skill. Abel brought a Lamb; the best in his flock. The fact that God accepted the one offering and rejected the other was significant. It may not be wise to speculate regarding the motives of the two men; at first they could have been equally sincere, but Cain's gift was a denial of his parent's teaching. Why did he reject their advice?

Many years later, Paul wrote to the Corinthians saying, "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks

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foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:22). Was there any similarity between Cain and the Greeks? It has often been said that nothing is new; that what is taking place now, happened earlier in history. Cain heard about the sacrifice of an animal, and considered it unacceptable. The Greeks heard about the atoning death of the Lamb of God and scoffed. Some people continue to ridicule the message of redemption through the blood of Christ, considering it to be an unfortunate prolongation of ancient doctrines. They believe that meritorious endeavor is sufficient to satisfy God and anybody else! When the Bible contradicts such ideas, scoffers reject the Scriptures, considering them to be a collection of outward dogmas. Paul wrote, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Cor. 1:27).

Cain's Chance... Demanding

Error often leads to deep depression, but it is inexcusable when man blames God for personal failure. Cain was rebellious, and the acceptance of Abel's offering endorsed that conclusion. He considered his own contribution to be superior to any lamb, and proceeded with his plans. If the Almighty did not like what was done, it would be too bad! Cain did not deserve the second chance that God provided. It was amazing when the Lord said, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" Jehovah gave the opportunity for that offender to make amends for his failure.

The statement "sin lieth at the door" is intriguing. Lightfoot, Candlish, Excell, and other noted commentators believe God literally brought to Cain's door a sin offering that could be accepted or rejected. Others taught the lamb was crouching at the doorway as evidence of Cain's guilt. That the mercy of God should be extended to Cain was remarkable. The brothers in the flesh could have been brothers in the faith, but unfortunately, Cain became a follower of Satan: ". . . Cain who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:12). Even God's judgments are tempered by mercy.

Cain's Crime... Destroying

Matthew Henry, the noted commentator, said, "According to the Septuagint version of the Scriptures, Cain said to Abel "Let us go into the field." The Chaldee paraphrase adds that Cain maintained there was no judgment to come, no future state, and that when Abel spoke

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in defense of the truth, Cain took that occasion to fall upon him. However, that which the Scripture tells us is "Cain slew Abel

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because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (quoted from The Bethany Parallel Commentary of the Old Testament, page 21). Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown suggest: "Under the guise of brotherly familiarity, Cain concealed his premeditated purpose till a convenient time and place occurred for the murder." The Bethany Parallel Commentary of the Old Testament translates Genesis 4:8 this way: "And Cain said unto his brother, Let us go out into the field: and it came to pass when they were in the field, that Cain rose up and slew him" (Gen. 4:8).

Cain's attack upon his brother was the climax of animosity which developed within his critical soul. He not only resented Abel's attitude and character; he was angered by God's refusal to accept his offering. Men who rebel against the Almighty invariably criticize His followers. The first murderer looked at the dead body and decided everything Abel had represented died with him. He was mistaken: "And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew . . . then began men to call upon the name of the LORD" (Gen. 4:25-26). When Cain murdered Abel he destroyed himself. Men who remove God from their lives discover very little is left.

Cain's Curse... Denouncing

When God said to the unrepentant murderer, "And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand" (Gen. 4:11), it became evident the sin offering had been removed from his door. The Lord never repeated the statement "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" Later, Jehovah said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. 6:3). That fact was evident in the experience of the first murderer. Cain thought of self-preservation; he never regretted the death of Abel nor the sorrow of his parents. He was frightened by the prospect of becoming a defenseless transient. He said, "And it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me" (Gen. 4:14). It is beyond comprehension that God arranged for the protection of the guilty man. Cain took one of his sisters (see Gen. 5:4) and began his journey into the unknown. He built a city and became the head of a prosperous tribe. Some of his descendants became ranchers who bred cattle, the makers of musical instruments, and the founders of industries. Cain became wealthy but remained a pauper: "He went out from the presence of the

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Lord" (Gen. 4:16). Land was easily acquired; Cain took what he desired. He would have been wiser had he grasped the outstretched hand of his father's God.

The type of curse that fell upon Cain was never defined. It might have been a tribal mark or a physical infirmity that made it impossible to forget the past. It is interesting to know that among his offspring were men who bred cattle. Maybe Cain helped to provide offerings for other people, but there is no record that he ever offered another for himself. Like many of his grandchildren he became wealthy, but he never laid up for himself treasure in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:20).

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