

# Bible Studies

## Cain and Abel

### Read Genesis 4v1-12

Adam and Eve's sin seemed small, and we assume they went on to live basic good lives, but the damage had already been done. In this passage we see the effects of their disobedience. This effect was far beyond what they could have imagined. They sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind.

### Abel kept flocks Cain worked the soil.

Anthropologists describe a fundamental conflict between those who raise crops and those who herd animals, their needs are conflicting. (it is possible this is reflected in the command against combining wool and linen in a garment. Deut 22v11)

### What did Cain offer? What did Abel offer?

### What reasons do you think they had for bringing sacrifices in the first place?

There is no record that God commanded them to bring sacrifices. Nor are we told what the sacrifices were for although the implication is that they were firstfruit offerings. Deuteronomy 18v4 Numbers 18v8-14. The reasons could have been;

*To seek forgiveness for sin. As an act of worship to God.  
As a token of thanks to God. As a declaration of faith in God's provision.*

The Hebrew 'minah', suggests the goal as worship, rather than repentance. In all likelihood it was a combination of these reasons.

### What was God's attitude towards the two sacrifices?

The question is why was Cain's sacrifice unacceptable? **There are three possibilities:**

1

Some have suggested that the absence of blood was the problem.

### Were crop offerings acceptable to God? Leviticus 2v1

Under the law, sin offerings required blood, Leviticus 6v30. This possibility rests on the assumption that this was an offering for sin. As we have seen the Hebrew suggests this was not a sin offering. (*Minah* is used of the grain offering) What is more Cain's, brought fat portions. Under the Law, these were not sufficient for sin either, (they were only a part of the sin offerings, Leviticus 4v8-10.) Blood is not never mentioned in this passage.

It is certainly true that God will not accept any old sacrifice for sin, it had to be a blood sacrifice. Today God will not accept, for example; good works, gifts to the church, etc. as sin offerings. Instead we must confess our sin and believe in Jesus, 'once for all' sacrifice on the Cross, as our means of forgiveness. No other sacrifice is acceptable.

Some have suggested that Abel's sacrifice was unacceptable because it was the fruit of the soil, consequently the product of the curse, 3v17. This is tenuous.

2

There is a Jewish tradition that states that Abel brought the best of His flock while Cain did not bring his best but brought substandard produce. If it was a firstfruits offering it did not have to be the best only the first. Maybe Cain gave leftovers.

3

The third possibility is that the offering was acceptable but not the way it was offered.

*By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. Hebrews 11v4  
Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. 1 John 3v12  
Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion. Jude v11*

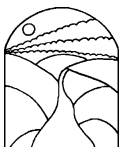
### What do these three passages tell us about the problem with Cain's sacrifice?

### What does Hebrews mean when it says that Abel's sacrifice was an act of faith?

God says If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? It was not the sacrifice that God rejected but Cain himself. I do not think it was the sacrifice but the way that it was brought and perhaps things that had gone before, that were the problem.

*When you sacrifice a fellowship offering to the LORD, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. Leviticus 19:5*

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**In what unacceptable way might Cain have brought the sacrifice?**

If the heart is wrong the offering can never be right.

**What do you think is needed to make a sacrifice acceptable?**

**What was Cain's response when God did not look favourable on his offering? v7**

Some believe that Cain's anger was that of bewilderment, he did not understand why his sacrifice was not acceptable, raising crops was harder work than tending flocks.

**If this is true does it excuse Cain?**

**Did God reject Cain?**

No he didn't; he talked to him and warned him of danger and encouraged him to do right. It is clear that Cain and Abel were real contrasts. I imagine there was a history of tension between them. God had room for both of them. Cain was not rejected because of his personality but because of his sin.

*Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." Genesis 4:6*

**Why was Cain angry? Did he have the right to be angry?**

**According to the above verse whose responsible for sin?**

**What obligation does God give us regarding sin?**

I believe this is a very important verse when it comes to sin. Sin contains many factors, temptation, genetic predisposition, upbringing, opportunity etc. These are sin crouching at our door, but they are no excuse.

Humankind has shown dramatic inability to master sin. *Master it!* cf. Luke 22v31

**Read Romans 6v12-16**

**How does this compare with Genesis 4v6?**

**What two alternatives do we have regarding sin?**

**What did God do to help?**

**How did Cain respond to God's admonition?**

**Were Cain's actions in the heat of the moment or premeditated?**

**Why do you think he killed Abel?**

**What should he have done?**

I guess you would call this misdirected anger. Cain was angry at God himself and Abel. Instead of asking why he was angry, instead of dealing with the problem he vented his anger on Abel.

**Why do you think Cain took his anger out on Abel?**

**What did this achieve?**

**What part did jealousy play in this?**

**What would have cured this jealousy?**

*"In your anger do not sin" ...do not give the devil a foothold. Ephesians 4:26*

**What are the dangers of acting out of anger?**

**What dangers does jealousy pose for us?**

Jude v11 spoke of the way of Cain. **What was Cain's way?**

It was the way of envy, of violence, unloving and uncaring. The way of surrender to the enemy and refusal to do the things that would bring him God's blessing. According to Hebrew 11v4, he is the antitype of faith. It seems clear that he did not believe there would be any consequences of his actions or judgement on his sin.

Cain denied being '*his brothers keeper*'. This denial was an excuse for his actions.

**To what extent are we responsible for those around us?**

**Is this phrase still used as an excuse for actions or our inaction?**

*Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Genesis 4:10*

*And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. Hebrews 11:4*

*You have come... to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. Hebrews 12:24*

**If Abel's blood cries out from the ground what does it say?**

**If Jesus blood also speaks what does it say?**

The contrast here is fascinating. Abel's blood cries out for justice, for vengeance, for retribution, of all the ill's of mankind for all the innocent blood shed through the millennia. Jesus blood cries out for forgiveness and atonement, a better word.

**What effect did the murder have on Cain?**

He was alienated from his family, he became a restless wanderer. Sin has the same effect on us.

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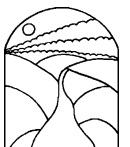
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(Lack of faith evil disposition, greed)



*Insincerity, duty, competition, heart not right, casually...*

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