

# Cain & Abel

## Introduction/Background

Studying the story of Cain and Abel reveals joy and victory right beside bitterness and loss. Their lives are the only glimpse we have into the lives of Adam and Eve immediately after they were banished from the garden of Eden. That God respected Abel and his offering is the first indication in Scripture that man could still please God and that grace and mercy would be offered. Even after sin it was still possible to speak with and have a relationship with God, though banished from the garden and under the curse.

But there is a much darker side to this brief glance into their lives. It is deeply disturbing to see how quickly mankind degenerated into terrible moral and spiritual chaos. Truly, the lie of the serpent that “*your eyes will be open and you will be like God knowing good and evil*” must have been bitter to Eve as they were forced to bury a son after such a short time on the earth. Abel was the first to go back to the dust, and it was far sooner than anyone would have dreamed or imagined.

More bitter still was Cain’s departure. His newfound knowledge of evil led him to forever walk away from the presence of Jehovah(Gen. 4:16). He went on to become the father a corrupt race of men who had no care or concern for God(Gen. 4:16-24). Even after many generations, their pollution and corruption did not recede. Even after the “*sons of God*”(the descendants of Seth - Gen. 5) saw “*the daughters of men*”(Cain’s offspring), there was no restoration of elevation of their spirituality or morality. After intermarriage it went all the other way. The corruption and violence that started with Cain soon filled the entire earth. Ultimately what Cain started here led to the destruction of all that breathed.

*Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, 2 that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. ...5 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 So the Lord said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” 8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. ...11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. .... 13 And God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. .... And behold, I Myself am bringing flood waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. Gen. 6:1-2; 6:5-8; 11-14; 17-18*

There is so much we would like to know about Adam and Eve after they left the garden of Eden, but God only revealed the birth of three sons. First Cain, then Abel and later Seth. We are told that Adam was 130 when Seth was born(Gen 4:3). Since Seth was born after these events, all that is recorded about Cain and Abel and these sacrifices occurred in a period of less than 130 years.

## In the Process of Time...

*Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the Lord.” 2 Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. Gen. 4:1-2*

During this 130 year period before the birth of Seth, Eve had Cain and Abel(and since Cain had a wife and Eve “*was the mother of all living*” (Gen. 3:20), there was at least one more daughter). Everything we would like to know about the excitement of birth and whatever hopes and dreams Eve had for her sons are passed over in silence. All we know about life during this period is summed up in their occupations. Cain was a farmer and Abel was a shepherd. This is all the Holy Spirit revealed before the story opens:

*And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. 4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. Gen. 4:3-4*

After being expelled from the garden, their lives unfolded and the time here recorded arrived. There was nothing special or significant, it simply came about in the course of their lives. Nothing is said about this being the first time. Just that as life passed day by day, a day came when these events occurred. It was nothing special. There is no record of any special days during the lives of the Patriarchs. We are not even told if Adam and Eve were present to witness these events. Only that Cain and Abel brought offerings to the Lord as they felt the need at God’s direction, and that and as life moved, the time came when they brought these offerings. Cain brought fruit from the ground he had tilled and Abel brought his offering from the firstlings of the flock he shepherded. Both brought offerings from the sweat of their own brow in their chosen occupation. But something went wrong.

*And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, 5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. Gen. 4:4-5*

These are the only details we have about this event. Cain failed in some way to gain God’s respect for his offering. Although many have tried to figure out the exact problem, there is not enough information to be certain. God is no respecter of persons and never shows partiality, so there is no doubt the problem centered on Cain and his offering. But the specific nature of the problem is not revealed. We can eliminate some of the possibilities. David spoke of offering things that cost him nothing, but Cain and Abel both brought their offering from the sweat of their brow, so there was no difference in the work and

value of the offerings.

*Then King David said to Ornan, "No, but I will surely buy it for the full price, for I will not take what is yours for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings with that which costs me nothing." 1Chr. 21:24-25*

Others have suggested Cain should not have brought a vegetable offering. Yet God later asked Israel for grain offerings.

*When anyone offers a grain offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour. And he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it. 2 He shall bring it to Aaron's sons, the priests, one of whom shall take from it his handful of fine flour and oil with all the frankincense. And the priest shall burn it as a memorial on the altar, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord. Lev. 2:1-3*

We can speculate concerning motives or quality, but there isn't enough information given to find the specific cause and "*the secret things belong unto God*" (Deut. 29:29). As God looked upon the efforts of both young men, He manifested approval and disapproval, showed regard and no regard, took note and ignored. There was something different in the offerings and it was enough to force our God of mercy and grace to reject Cain's. They knew the outcome immediately and tangibly. God's respect of Abel's offering, led him to respect Abel by some form of obvious acceptance. God also made it clear to Cain that He did not respect his efforts or offering. Although we don't know exactly how God manifested these feelings we have other examples to consider. God showed , regard and respect for Solomon's sacrifices in the Temple and Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel. Everyone knew immediately that God was pleased.

*When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. 2 And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house. 3 When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped and praised the Lord, saying: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever." 2 Chron. 7:1-3*

*And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. 37 Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again." 38 Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!" 1 Kings 18:36-39*

God may have done this or something else, but however God did it, it honored Abel and left Cain empty and angry. Clearly something was very wrong with what Cain had done. It is also obvious from Cain's response that he did not expect what happened to occur. Anger is generally a sign that what occurred did not turn out as we expected or wanted it to turn out.

*And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. Gen. 4:5*

There was also a change in his countenance(literally his face) and more specifically the look on his face:

*panim ...* In its most basic meaning, this noun refers to the "*face*" of something. First, it refers to the "*face*" of a human being: "And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him..." Gen. 17:3. In a more specific application, the word represents the *look on one's face*, or one's "*countenance*": "And Cain was very [angry], and his countenance fell" Gen. 4:5. (Vine's Expository Dictionary OT:6440)

So Cain had an expression on his face that manifested expectation and anticipation as the sacrifices were being assessed by God. He might have shown hope or determination, perhaps concern and fear, maybe even excitement, but when God showed his offering no respect, this look on his face(countenance) fell. Something happening within Cain's heart now showed on his face and also in the emotion of his anger. Did he pout or frown? Did he feel grief and sorrow that flashed into anger? Was it deep disappointment that created the anger? Did he know in his heart that he had been pushing the envelop of God's commands, yet expected God to be pleased with his ingenuity? It could have been any of these things. His expectations or hopes were not met. What he wanted to happen did not happen and he was sullen and angry.

Yet in God's question there is a subtle hint that he should have known and really did know.

*So the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." Gen. 4:6-7*

Both God's question of "*why are you angry*" and His counsel of "*If you do well*" was a clear condemnation of the sacrifice. Cain had not done well, he should have known that he was not doing well, and he should not have been angry but penitent. After all, the purpose of offerings is to please God, not to please ourselves. When God was not pleased it should have been obvious to Cain that he needed to do something to fix it. God had given clear instructions and Cain had done something that could still be easily fixed, "*if you do well!*" Cain had ignored something in God's instructions either by leaving something out or adding something in. Yet it was not too late to fix the problem Cain had created. Without any further explanation God simply told him he still could still do well. God would then accept his offering in the same manner He did Abel's and Cain's countenance would then be lifted up. Since God gave no further instructions, He expected Cain to know exactly what he needed to do to change the outcome.

The additional warning revealed God's insight into the grave danger confronting Cain. His fallen countenance and anger presented two clear but opposite directions on the path he was walking. He could turn around, retrace his steps by repenting and turn back to the path of God and "do well." If he did not turn, he would "do not do well," and it would lead him right to the doorway of sin. Both the desire(lust) he felt at that moment (anger) and the enticement of further alienation from God had come together at this moment.

*But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. James 1:14-15*

If Cain did not rule over this desire(anger and frustration), sin would use it as an opportunity to enter and rule over him. He must rule over the desire, or sin would rule him. Instead of turning back to the right path in repentance(if you do well), his anger would lead him to compound his problem. God warned him to take the necessary steps to control it before it controlled him and led him further away.

*Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. Gen. 4:8*

Cain did not listen to God. He did not "do well." He did not fix the offering. He did not control his desires. The conversation with God was finished. But later, he continued this conversation with Abel. Nothing is revealed here about the nature of the discussion. Only that it so displeased Cain that he rose up against Abel and killed him.

The final conversation between God and Cain showed no remorse for the rejected offering or the murder. He simply went on with his life forgetting both his brother and his God(Gen. 4:9-16).

The brevity of the account leaves us with many questions that cannot be answered here. What did Cain do wrong in his offering? Why did his countenance fall? Why did he become so angry? What were he and Abel talking about? Why did Cain kill Abel? God does not answer any of these questions in Genesis. But a careful reading of the rest of the Scriptures will answer most of them.

## Later Scripture

Cain and Abel are mentioned several times by Jesus and by the Holy Spirit through His apostles and prophets. The attitudes of Abel's heart are described and commended. Cain's reasons for killing Abel are also explained. Jude tells us that Cain's actions forged a path or way that many others have followed and by looking at all the principles involved we can have a very clear idea of exactly what occurred.

### Cain's Works were Evil

*In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. 11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, 12 not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. 1Jn. 3:10-12*

Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle John adds many details to the account in Genesis. First, He reveals that in Cain and Abel we witness the very beginnings of the children of God and the children of the devil. Cain did not practice righteousness and did not love his brother. He was a child of the devil and of the wicked one. NOTE: Cain did not become a child of the devil after he killed Abel. He was a child of the devil and was practicing evil even as he was bringing the sacrifice. All the effort involved(works) in that offering were evil. God showed no respect to Cain or his offering because Cain's works were evil and he was of his father the devil.

John also enlightens us to the reason God respected Abel and his offering. While Cain's works were evil, Abel's were righteous. What Abel brought was exactly right. It met all God's specifications for what is just and right. Abel's good works created a strong contrast. His good actions showed even more clearly the evil that Cain had done. In accepting Abel, God showed Cain what was right and gave him a chance to fix his error. Instead of repenting and doing well, Cain chose to destroy the source of his shame. He killed his brother for this one reason. **Because** his works were evil and Abel's works were righteous.

### Abel was Acting as a Prophet

Jesus as the Word, who was with God and was God, was present with God when these sacrifices were brought(Jn. 1:1-3, 14). He knew exactly what had occurred and why God had treated the offerings differently. He also witnessed that final conversation between Abel and Cain in the field. Jesus revealed that this murder was the very first act of persecution. Abel was the first prophet and his blood was shed by an evil person(Cain) because he had preached the truth.

*Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' 50 that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, 51 from the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation. Lk. 11:49-51*

While in that field, Abel was speaking to Cain not just as his brother and a righteous man, but as a prophet of God. As with all other prophets, it was no longer Abel who was speaking. It was the Holy Spirit moving Abel to speak His words using Abel's mouth.

*knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. 2Pet. 1:20-21*

Abel's words were not "by the will of man." He was "moved by the Holy Spirit." The conversation centered on Cain's offering. Abel was preaching to Cain, warning him of the evil of what he had done and seeking to get him to repent and "do well." He was God's spokesman "reproving, rebuking and exhorting" and Cain stopped him by killing him. Cain's murder was the first act of persecution and Abel's death was the blood of the first prophet shed from the foundation of the world.

## **The Essential Difference in the Sacrifice**

*By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. Heb. 11:4:*

The Holy Spirit revealed in Hebrews that there was only one essential difference between Abel's offering and Cain's. That one difference made Abel's sacrifice "more excellent" than Cain's (which also made Cain's works evil and Abel's righteous).

*pleion... the comparative of *polus* ... is used (a) as an adjective, "greater, more," ... (b) as a noun, ...Mt. 12:41, "a greater (than Jonah)"; v. 42, "a greater (than Solomon)"; in these instances the neuter *pleion*, "something greater" ... "more, greater," ... is translated "more excellent" in Heb. 11:4, of Abel's sacrifice ..." (Vine's NT:4119)*

When comparing sacrifices, Abel's had something greater. It was this that led God to respect Abel and his offering and held him back from respecting Cain and his offering. Cain's offering was missing something. Abel had an ingredient in his sacrifice that made it greater and more excellent. What was missing? What did Abel have that Cain lacked?

*"By faith Abel offered..."*

Abel had faith when he offered his sacrifice and Cain did not. It was by this faith that "he obtained witness that he was righteous." It was faith that led God to respect Abel and his offering and it was a lack of faith that led God to reject Cain and his offering. It was faith that made Abel's offering righteous and it was a lack of faith that made Cain's offering evil. Faith made Abel's offering righteous in the same way that as Abraham "believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). When God speaks and His people trust and act on His word, it is always accounted as righteousness. Abel's sacrifice, offered by faith, was well received, and even though Abel is dead, through this accepted sacrifice, "he being dead still speaks." So the account of Cain and Abel is very important and holds a powerful doctrinal significance to us today. Abel is still speaking. He is one of "the great cloud of witnesses." The story of his sacrifice, made by faith, needs to be heard as we enter our own worship and bring our own offerings. Every time we offer our worship to God we should hear Abel's whisper, "be sure to make this offering by faith just like I did." So in our singing, praying, communion, offering and hearing God's word we must be using our faith exactly as Abel did with his.

## **Faith comes by Hearing**

Since faith is the only difference between the two sacrifices, it is critical to understand exactly what must be done to offer something by faith. Faith is trust in God, so offering by faith means offering in such a way that we show our faith in God. How did Abel do this?

*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Rom. 10:17*

Without God's word there is no faith. Before anything can be done by faith, God first has to speak. Only after God speaks and reveals His will can we hear exactly what He is saying, fully trust it and completely submit with awe and reverence. So now we know! The difference between Abel and Cain was in how they heard and responded to God's Word. God told them both exactly what He wanted them to do. Abel brought his offering exactly as God asked him to bring it. The reverent manner in which Abel offered it and the complete trust and full submission manifested in the offering itself is what faith brought.

Cain was also told exactly what God wanted him to do. He too had the opportunity to reveal to God his full trust and submission by the manner in which he complied. But what Abel heard, Cain ignored. Abel did all God said and no more, Cain did less than God said or did more. It is that simple. The universal principle of all worship and all offerings we bring to God is set forth here. If we are listening to Abel carefully, then "through it he being dead still speaks." Those of us who are listening to Abel's testimony and following it's example are therefore as righteous as Abel was. Listen to Jesus condemning those who are walking the way of Cain.

*These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." Mt. 15:8-9*

This is exactly what Cain did. He drew near to God with his mouth, but his heart was far from God. His offering was vain because it came from his own heart. It was a commandment of men. Cain twisted or changed the commandment just enough that it was no longer the Word of God he followed. He was following a command, but it was one he had modified and changed into a command of man instead of from God. There was no "faith coming by hearing the Word of God" in Cain.

Since faith only comes by hearing what God says, Abel heard what God said and did it exactly. He added nothing to the command and dared take nothing away. God gave clear instructions. Abel heard, trusted

and brought the sacrifice exactly as God asked him. He fulfilled the principle set forth in Proverbs.

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil. Pr. 3:5-7*

Abel trusted in the Lord with all his heart and allowed God to direct his path. This led him to offer a more excellent sacrifice. Unfortunately, Cain made the mistake of leaning on his own understanding. Cain did not acknowledge God in all his ways. Because he was “wise in his own eyes,” He brought a sacrifice that had been tainted with his own understanding and God refused to accept it.

## **The Way of Cain**

*I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. 4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. ... 11 Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. Jude 3-4*

In contending earnestly for the faith, each Christian must learn to recognize and reject “*certain men*” who “*have crept in unnoticed, ungodly men.*” They can be identified because “*long ago*” they “*were marked out for this condemnation.*” Jude pronounced a “*Woe to them! For they have gone **in the way of Cain...***” Can’t get much simpler than that. Cain is an example of ungodly men. He is one of those God used to “*long ago mark out*” all who follow a similar path. Cain forged a path for ungodly men to follow and many today are following that path. His works were both “*evil*” (1Jn. 3:10), and “*ungodly*” (Jude 3). They are now a template for those who “*contend for the faith*” to identify any today who “*have crept in unnoticed.*” Cain’s offering is the exact opposite of “*contending for the faith.*” His offering contends against faith and leads all who follow him away from faith. This is why his works were evil! Anyone imitating him today is both evil and ungodly. So just as Abel’s sacrifice still speaks today so also Cain’s works still speak today!

## **Foundation of all Worship**

Jesus revealed the foundation of all worship God is seeking for us to bring Him. As we carefully consider these words it becomes obvious that Jesus is saying exactly the same thing as Abel who “*through it he being dead still speaks.*”

*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” Jn. 4:23-24*

God has always sought worshipers who worship in spirit and truth. Clearly this is what Abel was doing since God respected his worship (offering). There is a direct parallel between offering in truth and offering by faith. Remember, faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Truth is also the word of God. “*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth*” (Jn. 17:17-18). God’s word is truth and faith comes by hearing the word of God. So the faith that comes by hearing the word of God is also the truth of God’s word.

When God revealed the truth to Abel, he was a genuine worshiper and his offering in spirit and truth. God sought Abel to be His worshiper and respected him for it. Abel’s offering was more excellent than Cain’s because it was “*by faith,*” and he was considered a genuine worshiper because it was in spirit and truth.

Cain did not believe the word of God so he did not follow it. He rejected the truth when he refused to trust God and follow His instructions exactly. All today who reject the truth or ignore God’s instructions travel the same path Cain first walked. God has marked out these people to give us an important template. Anyone who refuses to worship God in spirit and truth and to fully submit to His instructions in simple trusting faith is not following Jesus on the narrow way that leads to life but is walking the broad way, “*the way of Cain.*”

*“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. Mt. 7:13-14*

## **Those who followed Cain**

### **Nadab and Abihu**

*Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. 2 So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. 3 And Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the Lord spoke, saying: ‘By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.’” So Aaron held his peace. Lev. 10:1-3*

By offering a fire that God had not commanded them they offered profane or strange fire. It was therefore a “*command of men*” and was vain. Its principle, it was identical to what Cain offered. It was not from God’s word and they did not have faith when they offered it. They were told how to offer the sacrifice and they did it differently. When Moses saw what happened, he knew immediately what had occurred. He told Aaron that Nadab and Abihu had treated God in a disrespectful manner. They had not treated him as God and had not glorified him by holding His commands in awe and reverence. God had given them

the truth, but they ignored His word. God responded immediately revealing He was offended and angered at their sin. This is exactly what Cain did with his offering and what God implied when He said "if you do well."

## **King Saul**

King Saul also followed the way of Cain. Saul had ignored God's command to "go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey." (1Sam. 15:3). He thought he could honor God more fully by sparing "the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the Lord your God" (1Sam. 15:15), but God saw it differently: "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments" (1Sam. 15:11). Saul thought it would make God happy, pleased and honored by adding his own ideas to God's command. He thus modified God's word. What he did openly violated "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding" and "Do not be wise in your own eyes." Saul did not "trust in the LORD," but did "lean on his own understanding." Through the entire conversation, Samuel could not get Saul to see this truth because he was "wise in his own eyes." Samuel's final words of warning could have also been the same words Abel used to speak to Cain.

*So Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king." 1 Sam. 15:22-23*

Though Saul (and Cain) expected God to be pleased with their improvisation or modification, Samuel's simple question lays everything bare. Could God be pleased with an offering or sacrifice that ignores His commands? Could God ever accept an offering that was not in full submission and truth (in faith)? The answer is that "to obey is better" than any sacrifice. No matter how ingenious, anyone who offers a sacrifice that ignores or modifies a command of the Lord is only manifesting their rebellion in their worship. If they then refuse to listen when godly men warn them, they are being stubborn. All that pleases God requires that we "obey" and "heed." What God saw in Saul (and earlier in Cain) was "you have rejected the word of the Lord,"

## **Uzzah's Death**

Before the decision was made to move the ark of God, David discussed his plans with "the captains of thousands and of hundreds, even with every leader." No one found any problem (1Chr. 13:1-4). When the day came, "they carried the ark of God upon a new cart." No objections were raised. Yet when the oxen stumbled "the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzza, and He struck him because he put his hand to the ark; and he died there before God." (1Chr. 13:6-10). At first, "David became angry because of the Lord's outbreak against Uzza." He could not understand why God would do such a thing. After a time of reflection and study he saw the error. "Then David said, No one may carry the ark of God but the Levites." He saw that they had made the same mistake as Cain and Nadab and Abihu. "God made an outburst on us, for we did not seek Him according to the ordinance." 14 So the priests and the Levites consecrated themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel. 15 And the sons of the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders, with the poles thereon as Moses had commanded according to the word of the Lord" (1Chr. 15:2, 13-15).

David read in the Law of Moses that God had commanded the Levites to carry the ark (Num. 4:15). It was an obscure command and had been forgotten. No one had thought to "seek him according to the ordinance!" They had not offered this by faith. They had violated a command, and even though they were unaware of it, God saw it exactly as He saw the way of Cain and thus He did not respect them or their sacrifices.

## **Conclusion**

These are but a few of the multitudes who have strayed into way of Cain. Those today who see God's worship as a means to manifest their own creativity and wisdom are doomed to failure. To obey and heed is what God desires. He seeks genuine worshipers who will worship in spirit and truth following His instructions exactly. He wants more excellent sacrifices offered in faith that comes by hearing, respecting and trusting the word of God. Abel is still whispering to us today. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't lean on your own understanding." Don't walk on the path of Cain.

Worship is for God. It is the time we draw near to Him to honor, glorify and regard Him as holy and sacred. It is the time to submit, obey and heed. It is not the time for us to "say, 'My, how tiresome it is!' And you disdainfully sniff at it," says the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 1:13) Yet many who follow Cain are saying these very things today. They are weary of the five acts of worship. Bored with singing and making melody in their hearts they desire instrument accompaniment. Tired of listening to men as they pray and preach, some long for the voice of a woman. Weary of hearing only the word of God, and untouched by the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine, they want more and different. Those with itching ears, seeking for teachers after their own lusts are simply ignoring the words of Abel and chomping at the bit to follow the way of Cain. Just like Cain did to Abel, anyone who points this out today is "worthy of death." They may not kill, but they will scoff, scorn and reject the wisdom of God.