

In the Beginning: God Established Worship

Intro: In our day, how God is to be worshiped is a matter taken very lightly.

1. Some carelessly use the wrong standard - the Law of Moses.
2. Many use the silence of the Scriptures to innovate and offer to God whatever pleases them.
3. Others say, "It doesn't matter what is offered so long as one's heart is right."

1. The Worship of Cain and Abel - Gen 4:3-8

- A. God graciously gives sinners the opportunity to worship.
- B. The worship mentioned was *sacrifice*. This implies a consciousness of sin and a corresponding desire to seek fellowship by appeasement.
- C. Upon what basis did God respect Abel's offering but reject Cain's? Since God's specifications for worship are not revealed, we must be cautious in our conclusions:
 1. Cain offered a vegetable sacrifice, Abel an animal sacrifice. It appears from other examples that God required animal sacrifices in the patriarchal period: Noah (Gen 8:20-21); Abraham (Gen 22:2, 12-13); Job (Job 1:5).
 2. Abel's offering from the flock was "of their fat"; i.e., the most robust, best quality. They were also the "firstlings." The omission of any superlative description of Cain's offering may indicate that it was not the first or the best.
 3. God's rejection of Cain's sacrifice was not arbitrary, for God tells him that he will be acceptable upon the same condition as Abel (Gen 4:7a).

2. The Worshipers Themselves

- A. "The Lord respected **Abel and his offering**" (Gen 4:4). How the Scriptures characterize Abel:
 1. Abel's offering was "by faith" and thus it was "a more excellent sacrifice" than Cain's - Heb 11:4. Abel's sacrifice was a conscious effort to please God and put Him first.
 2. Abel was righteous (Heb 11:4); therefore his works were righteous (1 Jn 3:12).

B. God “did not respect **Cain and his offering**” (Gen 4:5). Cain’s characterization:

1. “Of the wicked one”; his works were evil (1 Jn 3:12).
2. Classed with Balaam who prophesied for profit and Korah who rebelled against Moses’ authority and was swallowed up in the earth (Jude 11).

C. There was more to the rejection of Cain’s sacrifice than some “technical violation” of worship. He was an ungodly man filled with evil motives and disrespect for his Creator. Thus, “*the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight*” (Prov 15:8).

3. The Antagonism Between Faithful Worshipers and False Worshipers

A. Cain reacted with great anger at his rejection (Gen 4:5b-6).

1. When confronted with error, a righteous man will confess his sin, correct his behavior and be thankful for the admonition. This is what Cain should have done.
2. God warns Cain about the dangerous path he is treading (Gen 4:7). Even at this time, it is within Cain’s power to resist temptation and rule over it. But so governed is he by evil that even the rebuke of God, Himself, falls on deaf ears.
3. Abel, then, becomes the first of all martyrs for the sake of righteousness (see Mt 23:35).

B. This antagonism continues today between those who worship according to the authority of the Scriptures and those whose worship is tailored to satisfy their own desires.

1. Even a wicked man feels the need to worship: “*Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector ...*” (Lk 18:10ff).
2. One may say he worships to honor and praise God, but what he *does* will reveal his true intentions.
3. When those intentions are exposed by the light of God’s word, the insincere man will react as did Cain. The sincere seeker will amend his ways.

C. God shows us from the very first pages of the Bible that what a man offers to Him as worship *does matter* and that as long as there is true worship, there will be false worship as well.

Conclusion: Truly, “*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*” (Jn 4:23).

