

Cain Faith & Worship

“And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard,” Genesis 4:2b-5a.

Our first, and entirely *human* reaction to the Lord’s rejection of Cain and his offering might be one of confused sympathy. It seems somewhat harsh and reactionary for God to treat Cain so unfavorably. After all, Cain was *attempting to worship and honor* God. Cain was also *sacrificing* of his own possessions- deliberately and willingly giving up something that he had undoubtedly worked very hard to produce. Additionally, Cain was *using his talents* to serve and worship God. And oh by the way, God hadn’t said not to offer fruit and vegetables, had He? All of which creates, initially at least, sympathy for “poor Cain”- he seems to have tried so hard, and done what **he** could to serve and worship Jehovah! How could a loving, just, and merciful God treat Cain so contemptuously? Why would He have such apparent disdain for Cain’s honest and sincere efforts?

As is always the case when “we” find fault with God, there is more to the story than we understand. Please consider carefully the inspired commentary of Hebrews 11:4 on the matter, *“By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain...”* Those first two words of the verse are of vital importance. What does it mean to act “by faith”? Again, let God provide the inspired answer, *“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ,”* Romans 10:17. There is just no other possible conclusion: God told Cain and Abel what sacrifices were to be offered, and how they should be presented. What it all boils down to is that Abel **did what God said, how God said to do it.**

But unfortunately, these things also tell us more about Cain’s attitude and actions. He was **not** honestly and sincerely doing the best he could to use his talents and abilities to serve God the best way he knew as we might have otherwise assumed. Instead, he was contradicting divine directives by giving God *what he wanted to*, calling it “worship” and “sacrifice,” and then expecting God to accept it. That’s rebellion, not faith; and that’s not worshiping God, it’s worshiping “self,” cf. Philippians 3:19! I realize this may not be how we *want* to see Cain and his sacrifice, but it is how **God** saw it.

Now let’s get the rubber on the road, so to speak. We are no better than Cain when we today substitute our desires for God’s will, call it “worship,” and then expect God to accept it because it’s what we want to give Him. When Cain did these things, God said he was *“of the evil one,”* 1John 3:12. Why wouldn’t God feel (and say) the same things about us, if we do the same things Cain did? He does, and will, Matthew 15:8-9, *“This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.”*

Read and follow your New Testament. It is the law of God under which we are to operate, Luke 16:16. If God didn’t specify a particular act as proper “worship,” then it cannot be “of faith,” and will not be accepted by God as such. Calling something “worship” that God didn’t, and then seeking to justify our actions by claiming they are “honest and sincere” uses of the talents God gave us didn’t work for Cain, and won’t work for us either. We can appeal to all the human reasoning we want to get “our” way, but our end will be the same as Cain’s in the judgment of God. And after all, it’s His judgment that counts!

The Hebrew writer says of Abel, that *“though he is dead, he still speaks,”* Hebrews 11:4. The same could be said Cain. Please listen to them both in regard to not only your faith and its

practice, but also your worship of our great God, won't you? (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ 7202 Madison Avenue, Indianapolis, IN; online at <http://www.southportcofc.org/>; email to mrcstrong@hotmail.com)