

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The Way of Cain

(Jerry Fite)

The firstborn son of Adam and Eve was Cain. To “get” a child was indeed a blessing of Jehovah, so she named him. “Cain,” which means “to get”. While he may have been a gift from Jehovah, he soon lived a life contrary to the way of Jehovah. His way provides some important lessons for us all.

Cain first displeased the Lord with his offerings. He “brought of the fruit of the ground” (Genesis 4:3). On the surface this seems reasonable because Cain was “a tiller of the ground”. He was offering the fruit of his labor. Why would God not honor such an offering?

We can look at the offering of Abel for a helpful contrast. Abel was a “keeper of sheep” and he “brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof.” (Genesis 4:2,4). We know Jehovah “had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect” (Genesis 4:4-5). In contrast, Abel’s offering was “by faith” and his works were “righteous” while Cain’s works were “evil” and not accepted by the Lord. God accepted Abel’s offering which was connected with his labor, but did not accept Cain’s.

His was evil and apparently not “by faith”.

To offer something “by faith”, one must follow the one whom they trust. God had instructed the sons of Adam and Eve as to the character of the offerings which He would accept. Abel complied with these instructions “by faith”. Cain did not.

Did God demand an “animal sacrifice” and therefore was displeased with the “fruit of the ground” offering? We do not know. It was not that non-animal sacrifices were inherently evil before God, because He commanded and received such sacrifices of Israel (*Leviticus 2*). It might be that Cain did not offer the “firstfruits” and “best” from his labor, while Abel did. Look closer and see that Abel “brought of the firstlings of his flock,” while Cain merely brought “of the fruit of the ground”. Abel’s sacrifice was “more excellent” than Cain’s (*Hebrews 11:4*). Later the excellent character of the “first-fruits” offered unto God was emphasized in what was given to the priests: “All the best of the oil, and all the best of the vintage, and of the grain, the firstfruits of them which they give unto Jehovah, to thee have I given

them” (*Numbers 18:12*). What we do know is that the character of the offering affected how God accepted the person. God did not have respect unto Cain because of the character of his offering.

Because God accepted Abel and his offering and not Cain, the older brother became angry and slew his younger brother, Abel. When God questioned Cain as to the whereabouts of his brother, Cain said, “I know not: am I my brother’s keeper?” (*Genesis 4:9*). Cain first “lies”, and then “rationalizes”. Both he and God knew what he had done to Abel, but his first response was to lie about it. He then tries to find some way to dull the harsh reality of his lie by implying he cannot know the whereabouts of his brother at all times.

When we are confronted with our sin, do we follow the way of Cain and first lie about what we have done? We are to “confess” our sins not lie about them. We should quickly accept what we have done and not prop up our denials with weak rationalizations “After all, I’m human” is not a good follow up for sin. Avoid the way of Cain. Offer God the best, confess your sin and repent, don’t lie and rationalize.