

# The second ever murder

## (a tale of 2 kingdoms)

Reading- Genesis 4.1-15

This is entitled the second ever murder, but what was the first? We find out in John 8:44 where the Lord says to the proud Pharisees “Ye are of your father the devil... he was a murderer from the beginning,” This is speaking of how Satan tempted Adam and Eve to fall and therefore murder themselves and the whole human race along with them. Mankind was in need of a Saviour. And a descendant was promised; a ‘seed’ who would bruise Satan's head. It's probable that when Cain was born his parents thought he might be that promised ‘seed’. They may well have brought him up as the ‘promised one’ and, when Abel his brother was born, Abel may not have been considered to be so important, surplus to requirements. Whatever the case, it's clear, Cain grew to be a very proud person. However Abel was the one who eventually grew to understand the way to God is to be humbled and to find faith, even though he may have been considered to be the junior and especially in moral behaviour.

Here in these two brothers we have the birth of two kingdoms. One of faith - the kingdom of heaven, and one of proud unbelief - the kingdom of men or of the earth. A notable verse to bear in mind and inform our understanding on this passage would be:

*1 Sam 16.7 “Man looketh on the outward appearance but the Lord looketh on the heart.”*

Both men knew they had a responsibility to their Creator God, so they each brought offerings, but Abel's was the only one that was accepted. It's not so much *what* they brought but the *way* in which it was brought that was crucial. Cain was probably very skilled and grew the wonderful plants that grew back then, very well, even though God had actually made them and caused them to grow. However Cain saw this offering as an opportunity to show off his skill, not to acknowledge his inadequacy and need before God. There was no faith or devotion to God, just an overconfident trust in his own abilities

Beware of pride; if you're skilled, just remember Who it is you gave you those gifts. They're meant to be used for God's glory, not to show off your own glory and boast in your own work, especially when it comes to the worship of God and religious devotion. False religion tries and tries to work religious offerings and ceremonies, not realizing it's an insult to God. Modern stage performances are a classic example of this type of thinking and sadly have crept into Christian church services. This modern entertainment style worship is a show of human skill, not a humble devotion offered, and is not acceptable.

Cain gave in order to get praise, he set traps for claps. Cain was ignorant of his guilt and sin and proud of his abilities. He thought his own effort would gain acceptance, he assumed his offering was going to be accepted because he was the ‘greatest’ son, the first born and ‘special’, the ‘great one’ with the impressive skills. However, God looks at the heart and Cain's was full of himself, full of pride, he had no room for God. His god was himself.

This wasn't true of Abel, he was a keeper of sheep, a shepherd, and he'd been brought to see that his life was in God's hands. He, evidently, had been brought to see his sin and had faith that God would provide a Saviour. His offering would show this. He realised there was nothing he could do to remove his natural guilt. He couldn't work to gain acceptance with God, he needed a free forgiveness. His offering was a picture of this, a symbol of the 'seed' who must come and die to take the punishment for men sins, in their place. It was a lamb, one of his flock, the best one God had given him. In Ephesians 2. 8,9 it says:

*"For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: is a gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast."*

Abel's was an offering to find acceptance, that showed he understood that he needed someone else to do it for him; namely God. Cain was trying to do it for himself. In his mind he had tried so hard and put so much effort into it, he couldn't understand why it hadn't been accepted.

This is like true and false religion. The difference between Christianity and all other false religions is that Christianity teaches salvation by the grace of God alone and false religions all try to find salvation by doing something to earn salvation by working it yourself. But this is a proud assumption and an insult to God's holiness. How can we expect to do a little good and a few religious ceremonies and pretend to pray and that will be enough for God? How does it make up for all our guilt and pollution? How does that make up for our lack of righteousness? The answer is, it doesn't. We need someone to work it for us, that someone is God the Son. Because Cain's offering was impressive to men, Cain, like false religions, expected his offering to be acceptable, but the worship of false religion isn't acceptable. It's not *spiritual*, it's *carnal*, of the earth.

When it wasn't accepted and Abel's, the younger 'inferior' brother's, was accepted, Cain was devastated, insulted and humiliated and, most of all, angry. After all, he thought he'd tried harder and put more effort in. It was a painful blow to his pride, his pride grew like a cancer which, when it took a blow, gave pain. In his pride he had been walking tall, head and shoulders above everyone, but when he wasn't accepted by God, he'd been brought down and it showed in his face. He thought he was better than Abel, he was self-righteous, but when God revealed the truth, that he wasn't righteous, Cain was crushed. He thought God had made a mistake, that's why he was angry. He refused to be humbled, he disagreed with God in proud unbelief. He thought this was all unfair.

Verse 7 is the key verse of the whole passage;

*"The lord said unto Cain why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. and unto thee shall be his desire and thou shalt rule over him."*

But what is this verse really saying? Well, first, what I believe it is not saying. In the NIV modern translation of the Bible, the verse is rendered *"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 rule over it."* This is not what the Greek says! The most accurate translation is what we had earlier from the KJV. There are three reasons I believe the NIV rendering and interpretation is incorrect;

1). The whole thrust of the passage is about sacrifice. Why, when the opportunity came to explain the 'remedy' to Cain, does God not mention the true sacrifice suggested earlier to his parents, the 'seed'?

- 2). There is an unwarranted personification of sin. The 'he' and the 'him' is changed to an 'it' making the person (he) sin.
- 3). It is in conflict with the doctrine of salvation by faith (the message of the passage and the whole Bible!). Instead it seems to advocate 'works', unless God is using a heavily veiled kind of reverse psychology which false religion hasn't cottoned onto until this very day!

The true meaning lies in understanding that the word '*sin*' here should be taken as '*sin offering*' or '*expiation*', the taking away of sin or purification of sin. So God is saying "Why are you furious? If you're not a sinner (for you seem to think you're righteous) then you're fine, but if you are a sinner, there's a remedy, a sin offering is provided for you, it's at your door. The door of your heart." It's like a special delivery, the doorbell is rung and a lamb is left outside, ready for slaughter, like the one provided for Abraham. "And besides," God seems to say, "*and unto thee shall be his desire and thou shalt rule over him.*" You will still be the first born, Abel's desire will still be for you and you'll still rule over him. But it was as if Cain didn't even hear this good news of the offering provided. He despised God's remedy and had no faith to open the door. He didn't think he needed it.

God doesn't do anything to prevent a man opening the door of his heart, the truth is, Cain didn't believe it and he didn't want it. It was humiliating to him, he only cared about his standing before men, not his standing before God. Instead he went out and killed Abel, when he should have killed the sacrifice provided. In Revelation 3:20 Christ says, "*Behold I stand at the door and knock*", but Cain wasn't opening the door, he wanted revenge.

Men do the same today, when the Christian Gospel message offends them and calls them a sinner in need of repentance and Christ, they become angry and persecute the people who truly follow him. They don't want God to save them, they want God to be pleased with them. Cain was like the proud Pharisee in Luke's gospel who "*prayed with himself*". Abel was like the publican who "*could not even lift up his eyes to Heaven*", but it was he and not the self-righteous Pharisee who went away justified. His offering was accepted, he came offering nothing but Christ, like it says in an old hymn; "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling."

We all have to admit we're not good enough for God. Cain's view of God was too low and his view of himself was far too high. He thought he could reach God by trying, but God is beyond our reach. No one is righteous, no not one, as it says in various places in the Bible like Ecclesiastes 7.20, Psalms 14.1-3; 53. 1-3 and Romans 3.10. If we are to be acceptable to God we must go to him with what he provides for us- Christ's perfect life and sacrificial death. We must learn to trust in him, instead of trying to save ourselves.

Cain went to talk with Abel. No doubt, Abel told Cain about salvation by faith not by works, like Christian's proclaim the Gospel message to those who follow false religions today. Cain should have accepted the truth from God Himself and from his true Church, which, at this time, consisted of maybe as little as one man and, at most, three people. But instead, Cain set about to destroy it. He murdered his brother in vengeance for spoiling his 'great' reputation as a religious worshipper. Abel was the first martyr. Anger in the heart ends in murder in the hands.

Soon God would seek him out and ask him where his brother was. Cain lies and says, "*I know not, Am I my brother's keeper?*" This was a compound sin, many sins in one. It was deceit, disrespect, pride, unbelief, unthankfulness and unrepentance. All on top of Murder. God's law was broken in pieces. Murder is a sin which cries out for justice, blood calls for blood, the murdered for the murderer. Only in Christ are believers saved from the curse handed down by our first parents Adam

and Eve and from our own breaking of God's law. Whether Black, White, Greek, Jewish or Persian all men are brothers, but there are only two kingdoms. However one kingdom hates the other. The kingdom of unbelief is against the kingdom of God's people.

The unbelieving kingdom isn't spiritual, it's just concerned with earthly physical things. It pretends to be spiritual but doesn't understand what that is. It seeks political strength and land, it follows men's rules and laws, made by false religion, about clothing restrictions and ceremonies and repeating of words, instead of trust in God's work done by Jesus Christ. Those, who are of it, try to feel good about themselves, but the way to God and real joy is to first feel bad about yourself. They're men of the earth not of heaven and the Earth will not help them like Cain. He was cast out and the ground would not "*yield unto him her strength*". And if you go the way of Cain, then the world may promise you much but deliver very little for you.

Cain was to be a fugitive and a vagabond; this proud man was now a proud outcast. His pride making him destitute. It's like a man who's too proud to wear a motorbike helmet because it will spoil his hair and good looks, but he falls off and it's terribly injured. We need the helmet of Salvation. Don't let pride be your ruin and downfall.

Cain complained to God, not of his sin, but of his punishment. It shows great hardness of heart to be more concerned about your sufferings than your sins. Cain brought a curse on all he did, and if we reject God we won't have his blessing but he'll frustrate all our plans. Nothing will go right in the end, even if He is good enough to preserve our lives. Go the way of Cain and the world will leave its mark on you like a stain and a scar on your soul. You'll be a 'cautionary tale', a walking warning not to rebel against God's law and spurn His grace. God will make His mark on you, haunted looks, hollowed out souls, hardened and fixed in sins. Cain went on to build a city. No doubt an iniquitous place, he was king of his own dung heap! But if you reject the pride of false religion and accept the free grace of the 'good news', then you'll find forgiveness and true life. Who can earn Heaven by their own effort? The answer is, no-one. But heaven can be ours because Jesus Christ earned it for us and gives us His righteousness freely, undeserved. He is the '*Lord Our Righteousness*', just like he is called in Jeremiah.

So, remember, *trust* not *try*, *humble* not *proud* and *faith* not *works*. Abel lost his earthly life but gained eternal life for his soul. Cain preserved his life but in the end lost his soul. Will you humble yourself and accept Christ as the sin offering who died on Calvary's cross, in doing so, making a substitutionary atonement for the sins of all those who would put their trust in Him? Or will you harden your heart against God, full of excuses, refusing His gracious gift, thinking you're right and He's wrong. Thinking you don't need Him, asking, "Why should I grovel to God?" The answer to that is, because it's not grovelling, it's being big enough to admit you're wrong and it's a fitting repentance in the light of this realization.

Do you hear that? A faint knocking on the door of your heart? Answer it! There's a free salvation waiting.