

The Wednesday Word, October 23, 2019: Two Men, Two Offerings and Two Verdicts

In Genesis 4, two men, Cain and Abel, the children of fallen Adam and Eve, each bring an offering to the Lord. Cain, the farmer, came with the labour of his hands; Abel, instead, brought the firstlings of his flock. Here we see two men and two offerings; two men standing before God waiting for a verdict.

Both Cain and Abel were sinners, but both were religious. They each knew that they needed to sacrifice to God. However, what a difference there was between their offerings. Cain's offering was one of works. He brought the produce of his toil and sweat. Can good hard work rid him of the fact that he and his sin have insulted God?

Abel's offering was different. From it we see that Abel understood the necessity of a substitutionary atonement. Abel, by faith, apprehended and bowed to this truth. He knew that, as a sinner, the only way of approach to the Lord was by a substitutionary blood atonement. That's why he slew a guiltless lamb of his flock and offered it to God. The Lamb hadn't sinned. It was innocent. Yet Abel offered it as his substitute.

Abel had no right to life; as a sinner he had earned and inherited both death and judgment. However, the lamb he offered, as his substitute, suffered both on his behalf. This of course pointed to, the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who would go to the Cross, and there, through the eternal Spirit, offer Himself without spot to God (Hebrews 9:14). There the mighty work of redemption would be accomplished, through the shed blood of Jesus (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Cain, on the other hand, ignored the fact that he had insulted God by his sins! He came before God with a gift, the product of his own labour. But it was a bloodless sacrifice. It was non-substitutionary. Would it be accepted? After all, it was a good offering ... a lot of hard work had gone into it.

Two men, two offerings, two men standing before God waiting for a verdict. Which will God accept? To our surprise, we read that "Unto Cain, and his offering, He (God) had not respect" (Genesis 4:5). God is true to His nature and character and refuses to look at sin without a blood atonement. In the eyes of God, our works cannot remove the insult and offence of sin.

In this passage, we see the great principle that "without shedding of blood is no remission" (see Hebrews 9:19-22). We also understand "... it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul" (see Leviticus 17:11-14).

Cain was angry that God had not accepted his scheme. He despised the blood atonement, murdered his brother and went out as a fugitive and vagabond from the presence of the Lord.

His sin was unpurged. He had rejected the blood of a substitute... the only shelter from the righteous wrath of God.

Centuries afterwards, God, in grace, came down from glory, became one of us, and dwelt among His people. His name was Jesus. He was the true substitutionary Lamb. All other sacrificial Lambs had, in fact, pointed to Him. At the awful cross of Calvary, the wrath of God fell upon

Him as He poured out His blood and substituted for His people. A new and living way was opened for the sinner, through his death, a living way which led right to the presence and glory of God (see Hebrews 10:19-25). The Good Shepherd, our Saviour and Lamb, died as our substitute. In Him, peace is proclaimed to the guilty. " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

And that's the Gospel Truth!